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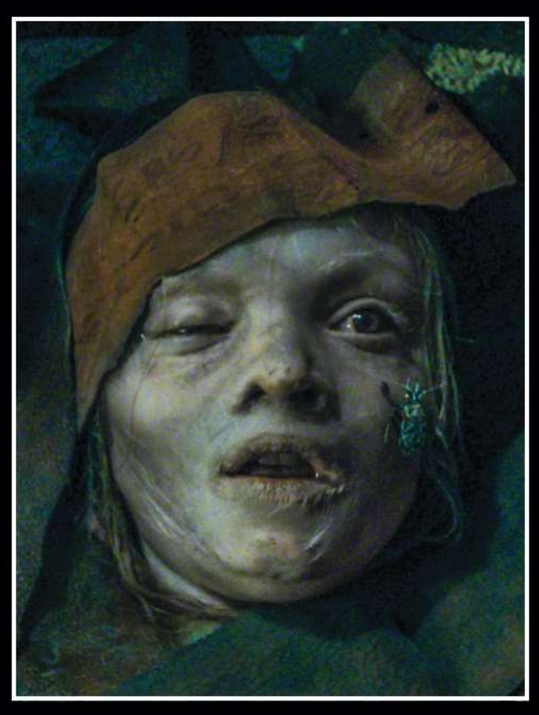

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FANGORIA

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ALL UNCREDITED PHOTOS FROM FANGORIA VAULT

INVOCATION

Worth The Wait

Sometimes when folks ask me what's in the next issue of FANGORIA, I stammer through an answer because I often don't know until I know. That's not to say there's no plan; once I get wind of a title, I will court coverage on that movie, and I'll even assign a writer the article, or travel them to a set if I think the project sounds like it's up Fango's alley.

But in what issue will those articles appear? Reader, that's up to the fates. And the film distributors. And sometimes the publicists.

Take Fango #31, which you're holding in your hands right now. The films in the pages that follow represent months, even years of curation and planning. The cover story on the new *Faces of Death*? That's a set visit from three years ago. We're lucky that the filmmakers (Isa Mazzei and Daniel Goldhaber) and the film's producer (Adam Hendricks, to whom I might have given COVID at Fantastic Fest in 2023) consider Fango staff to be friends, and they waved us in early. After that, like the filmmakers themselves, we waited… and waited… to hear about the film's release date. Taking this set visit out of the TBD pile (and putting it on our unsettling subscriber cover) is a massive feeling of relief.

This also happened to a lesser degree with other titles. Glenn McQuaid's soapy/hilarious *The Restoration at Grayson Manor* and Emily Bennett & Justin Brooks' cult horror *Blood Shine* were both films that were scheduled to run in earlier issues, both were films by folks excited to work with us on coverage, and now here they both are in the issue they're meant to be, timed with their releases so you can see the incredible work right when you read about it. It's been a year since I was on the Overlook Film Festival jury that awarded Addison Heimann's weird alien/body horror/toxic relationship comedy *Touch Me* the Grand Jury Prize for Best Feature Film, and I've been itching for that whole year to talk about the movie's absolutely insane performance by Lou Tayor Pucci. This issue closes that loop as well. Amen.

As not-stressful as it would probably be to have the whole issue mapped out well in advance, there's an energy to this more chaotic *modus operandi* that I kind of love. We don't have an old-school newsroom (Fango's 2026 editorial team is a handful of people working from their respective homes), but getting last-minute word that a film is hitting this quarter is often a retro, energizing scramble. It'd be nice to sometimes dial it back a bit — maybe, say, *two* movies could be late-breaking fire drills instead of four or five — but it's hard to complain about having such a wealth of exciting horror to cover.

For all the stress it might bring, getting to finally share some of these longer-gestating titles with you is its own kind of satisfying. And if it feels good to us, I can't imagine how the filmmakers must feel about finally getting their movies out into the world. For them, we'll keep scrambling.

Phil Nobile Jr., Editor-in-Chief

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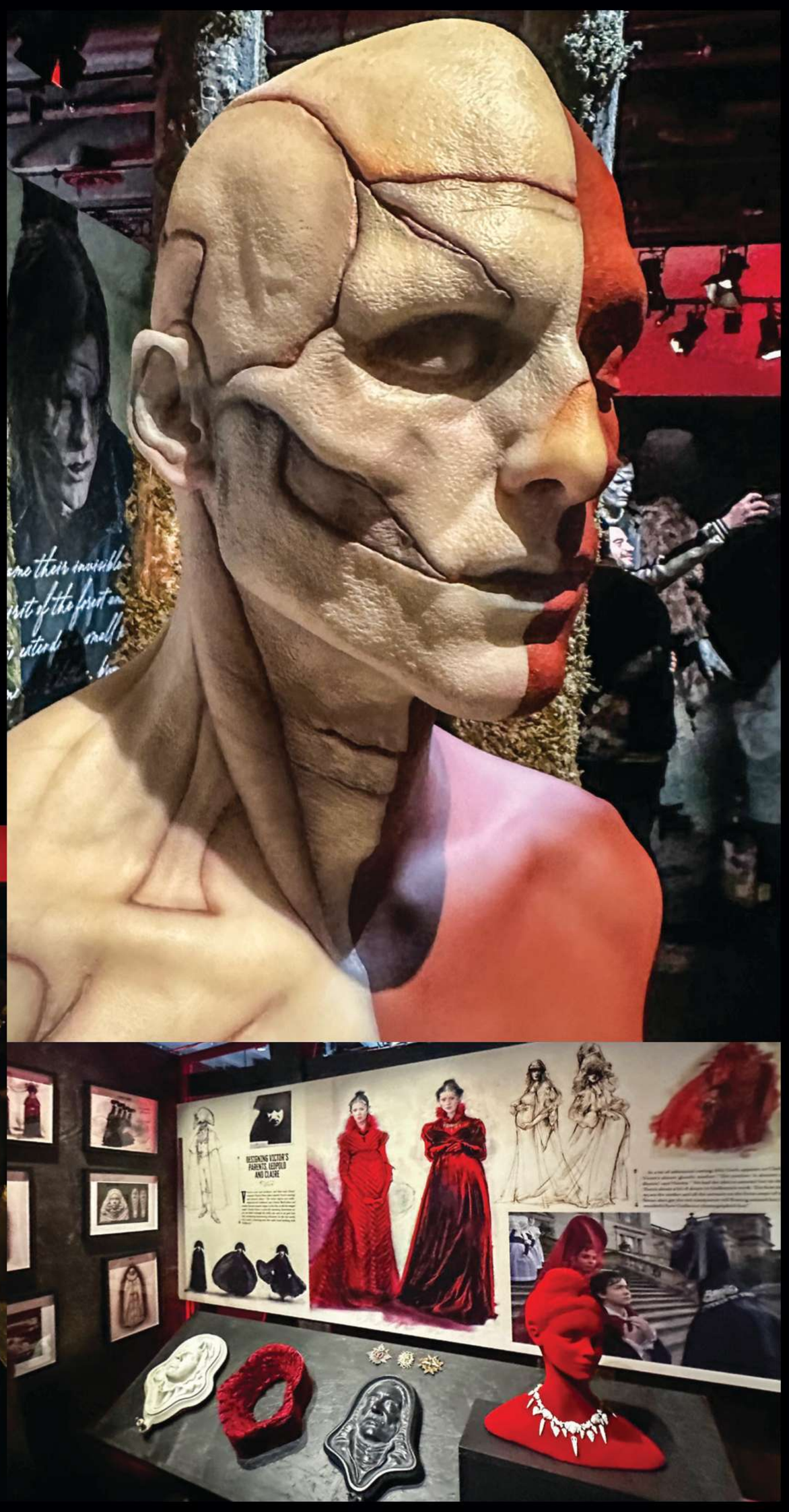
FRANKENSTEIN: CRAFTING A TALE ETERNAL - LA EXHIBITION

That Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* is a feast for our hearts, minds, and senses is difficult to dispute, however that poses some interesting challenges when creating an exhibition of the craft behind the film's creation. When every aspect of the film is so meticulously executed, every department at the very crimson peak of their chosen field, just how does one pick and choose which pieces to exhibit?

The answer is *Frankenstein*: Crafting A Tale Eternal, an exhibition celebrating the artistry, creativity, and imagination that goes into del Toro's visionary storytelling, his elaborate filmmaking process, and the exceptional craftsmanship of his team.

The exhibition also reflects del Toro's spirit of generosity and openness; there is no fee for the exhibition, only a need to book in advance, with display pieces so close one can almost feel the fabrics.

Curated with consideration and appreciation, with an impressive collection of costumes, jewellery, props, and artwork from the film, the exhibition honours the combined efforts that each department contributed to bringing *Frankenstein* to life. - Eden Williams



PHOTOS BY EDEN WILLIAMS

MONSTER INVASION

TAKE EXIT

By Amber T

THE LOST MAN (KAZUNARI NINOMIYA) CAN'T SEEM TO GET WHERE HE'S GOING.

THE WALKING MAN (YAMATO KÔCHI) HAS A SMILE FOR (BELOW) NINOMIYA'S LOST MAN AND THE BOY (NARU ASANUMA).

Video game to movie adaptations are notoriously tricky to pull off successfully (just ask *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* fans), but the difficulty increases tenfold when your source material has no visible protagonist, contains no action, and takes place in a single, utterly nondescript location. This was the challenge faced by filmmaker Genki Kawamura (perhaps best known to Western audiences as the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *If Cats Disappeared from the World*) when he decided to adapt *The Exit 8*, the Japanese indie horror title from developer Kotake Create, a hit with gamers following release in 2023 for its blend of sinister mundanity that perfectly encapsulates the 'liminal horror' trend.

The walking simulator follows an unknown, unseen protagonist in an unnamed Japanese subway station who has one simple objective: leave. To do so, players must move through eight seemingly identical corridor loops, keeping an eye out for subtle changes in the environment known as anomalies. Upon finding an anomaly, the walker must turn around and go back the way they came, which will put them a 'level' closer to escaping. Proceeding after an anomaly has been detected will reset any progress, and the loop will begin all over again. What sounds

PHOTOS COURTESY NEON

deceptively straightforward is actually an (often infuriating) exercise in perceptiveness and observation, two qualities that Kawamura's *Exit 8* reminds us are in short supply in our smartphone-addicted modern populace.

Wisely, Kawamura gives audiences an onscreen protagonist to relate to instead of shooting *Exit 8* in POV mode, with Kazunari Ninomiya (*Letters from Iwo Jima*) stepping into the role of The Lost Man, an asthmatic everyman who moves through life as passively as possible. Our first introduction to The Lost Man sees him witness an aggravated commuter screaming at a mother and her crying baby. Rather than step in to defend the woman, The Lost Man sheepishly ignores the escalating disturbance in favor of putting his headphones in and staring at his phone, desperate to avoid inconvenience.

Exit 8 has much to say about Japanese society, in particular as an exploration of the *owarinaki nichijô*, a term coined by sociologist Miyadai Shinji after the Tokyo subway sarin attack of 1995 that roughly translates to "endless everyday." Although referring specifically to the economic stagnation faced by Japan's post-bubble Lost Decade of the '90s, "endless everyday" can easily be applied to a sense of malaise experienced by any individual who faces the relentless monotony of the daily grind. But these themes of ennui and communal collapse are certainly universally applicable. Throughout *Exit 8*, The Lost Man faces choices that force him to take responsibility, help his fellow human and actually *engage* with the world around him, no matter how dull it may seem.

Life isn't all adventure and escapades, and in a world of increasing strife and violence, banality is a blessing. Next time you're on your daily commute, maybe put the phone away and marvel at the beauty of a bird in a tree, or give an elderly person a hand up the subway stairs. Because as *Exit 8* reminds us, the only way to exist without going mad is to do as the full Miyadai Shinji quote urges: *'owarinaki nichijo o ikiro' - live* the endless everyday. 💀

THE BOY FINDS HIMSELF IN PERIL (ABOVE) AND AMONG OTHER LOST THINGS UNDERGROUND.

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Tony Timpone's
ELEGIES

A FANTASTIC FOUR

Death can be unmerciful, and in the last few years, we have lost enough genre people to fill an Oscars "In Memoriam" segment. Not a week goes by without learning of unexpected and shocking demises, such as multitalented director Rob Reiner (*Misery*) and gifted comedian Catherine O'Hara (*Beetlejuice*). The following departed quartet enriched my life tremendously during my FANGORIA tenure and beyond:

TTX2: TONY TIMPONE AND THE GREAT TONY TODD.

Actor Tony Todd (d: 11/6/24) appeared in several franchises such as *Hatchet*, *Final Destination*, and *Transformers*, but it was as The Candyman that he cemented his reputation as one of the all-time great screen boogeymen. Tony was a gem of a guy. I could always count on him for a Fango convention or film festival appearance. The fans loved him at these events. Though he enlivened plenty of major studio films, he was also a true friend to independents, taking a chance on fledgling directors like Kern Saxton. He appeared in Saxton's film *Sushi Girl* and when it premiered at the 2012 Fantasia Film Festival, a supportive Todd was there.

In 2018, I invited Tony to attend the New York City Horror Film Festival to receive a "Lifetime Achievement Award." Behind the scenes, festival director Ronnie Hein informed Tony that her son, fest founder Michael J. Hein, had died unexpectedly in 2011. Before that, the indie producer/director had finished the script for a *Don't Look in the Basement* remake and cast Todd in the lead.

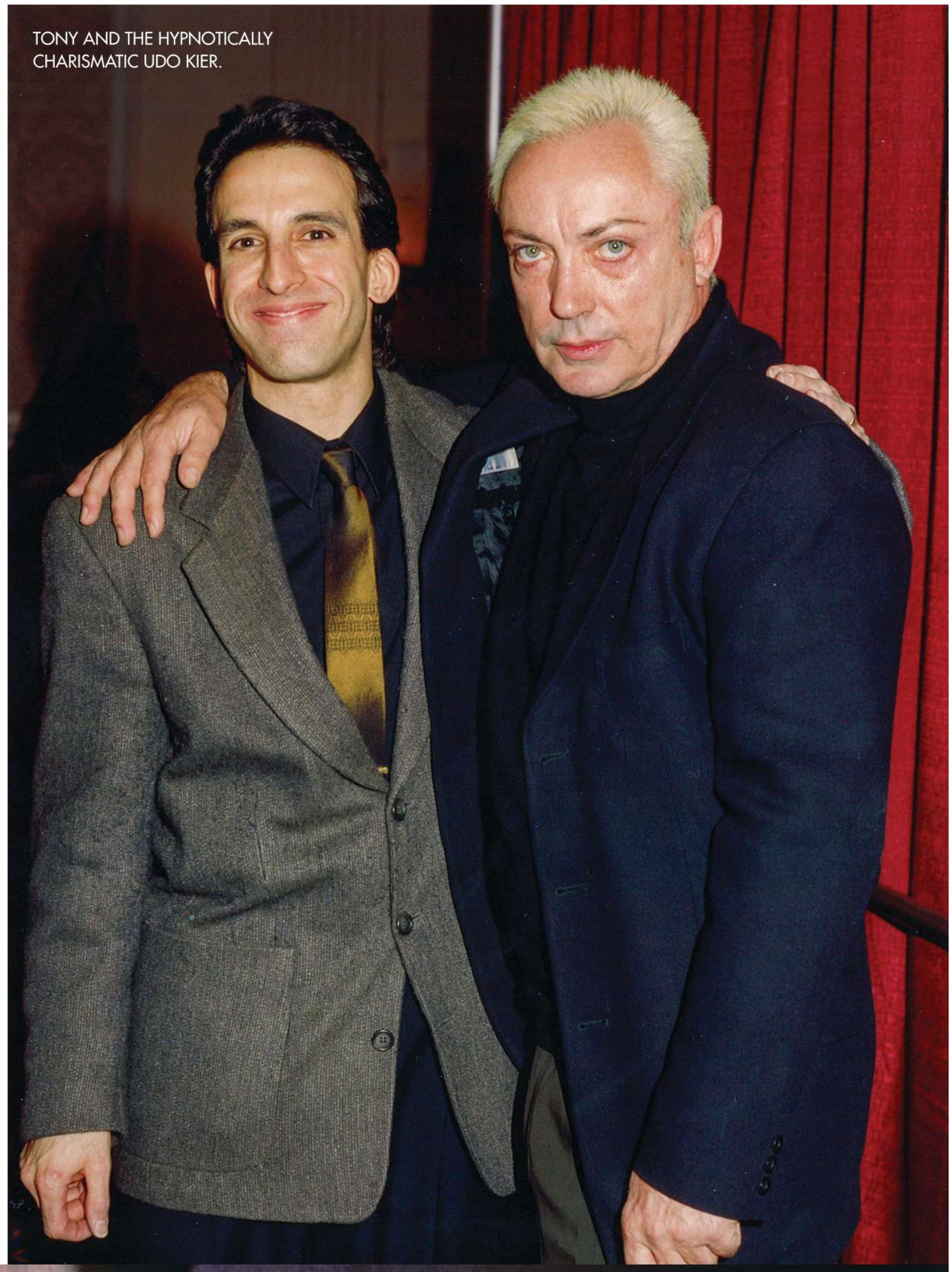
"Tony asked me if there was any way we could still get this movie off the ground as a final tribute to Michael," Ronnie recalls. The actor's sincere words comforted the still-grieving mother. That's the kind of guy Tony was.

German actor Udo Kier (d: 11/23/25) hypnotized me with his piercing green eyes and amazing presence in the 1970s sensations *Blood for Dracula*, *Flesh for Frankenstein* and *Suspiria*. I chased after him for years to secure him for a Fango convention. Udo worked *all* the time and he had never done an event like ours before. But once I got Udo on stage at the May 1999 Pasadena show, he wouldn't come off! With our next guests pacing in the wings, I frantically signaled to the *Blade* actor that it was time to go, but Udo was enjoying the adulation and refused to leave, announcing, "But no, no... I am Udo," which brought an eruption of applause. Schedule be

damned, I let Udo continue to eat into the time of the next panel.

Seven months later, I talked Udo into coming to NYC for our annual January Fango con. No one likes traveling to the Big Apple in winter, so I used the inducement that he would be receiving a FANGORIA/Creation "Lifetime Achievement Award." Udo agreed, and I secretly arranged for his *Dracula/Frankenstein* director Paul Morrissey to hand him the plaque. Somehow, the prize was misplaced and, although Udo wasn't a happy camper, Morrissey's warm praise smoothed things over. Later that night, show producer Adam Malin found the award, so we gave it to Udo the next day. An incredulous Udo insisted that we ran to a 24-hour trophy store to make up a new one to save face!

Scott Spiegel (d: 9/1/25) prowled those classic LA Weekend of Horrors in the 1980s and 90s, both as a fan and panel guest. Scotty was a school buddy and fellow film fanatic of Sam Raimi, Bruce Campbell, and Rob Tapert. Most impressively, he went on to co-write *Evil Dead II* and Clint Eastwood's *The Rookie*. When he directed his first feature, 1989's gruesome *Intruder*, he sent me an envelope packed with the bloodiest pics I had ever come across as an editor. One of those shots made the cover of GOREZONE #6, which thrilled him to no end.



TONY AND THE HYPNOTICALLY CHARISMATIC UDO KIER.

THE LATE SCOTT SPIEGEL AND A SMOKING BUDDY.

PHOTOS (FACING + TOP) COURTESY OF TONY TIMPONE, (BOTTOM) COURTESY OF SCOTT SPIEGEL

Die-hard collector Scotty owned a Los Angeles home filled with childhood monster and pop culture obsessions. He treasured Hammer Films and Three Stooges movies, and his pals included Quentin Tarantino, Eli Roth, and Oscar-winning editor Bob Murawski (*Send Help*), who was his roommate when I first met him. Not long ago, Scotty, Illinois filmmaker Marc Selz, and I joined forces on a horror-comedy called *Zombie Wedding*. Scotty wrote the script and planned on directing, but just when things started heating up on the project, he was fatally struck down in his home while eating a hamburger and watching Three Stooges shorts. "He died doing what he loved," Tapert told me. We're not giving up on *Zombie Wedding*, Scotty!

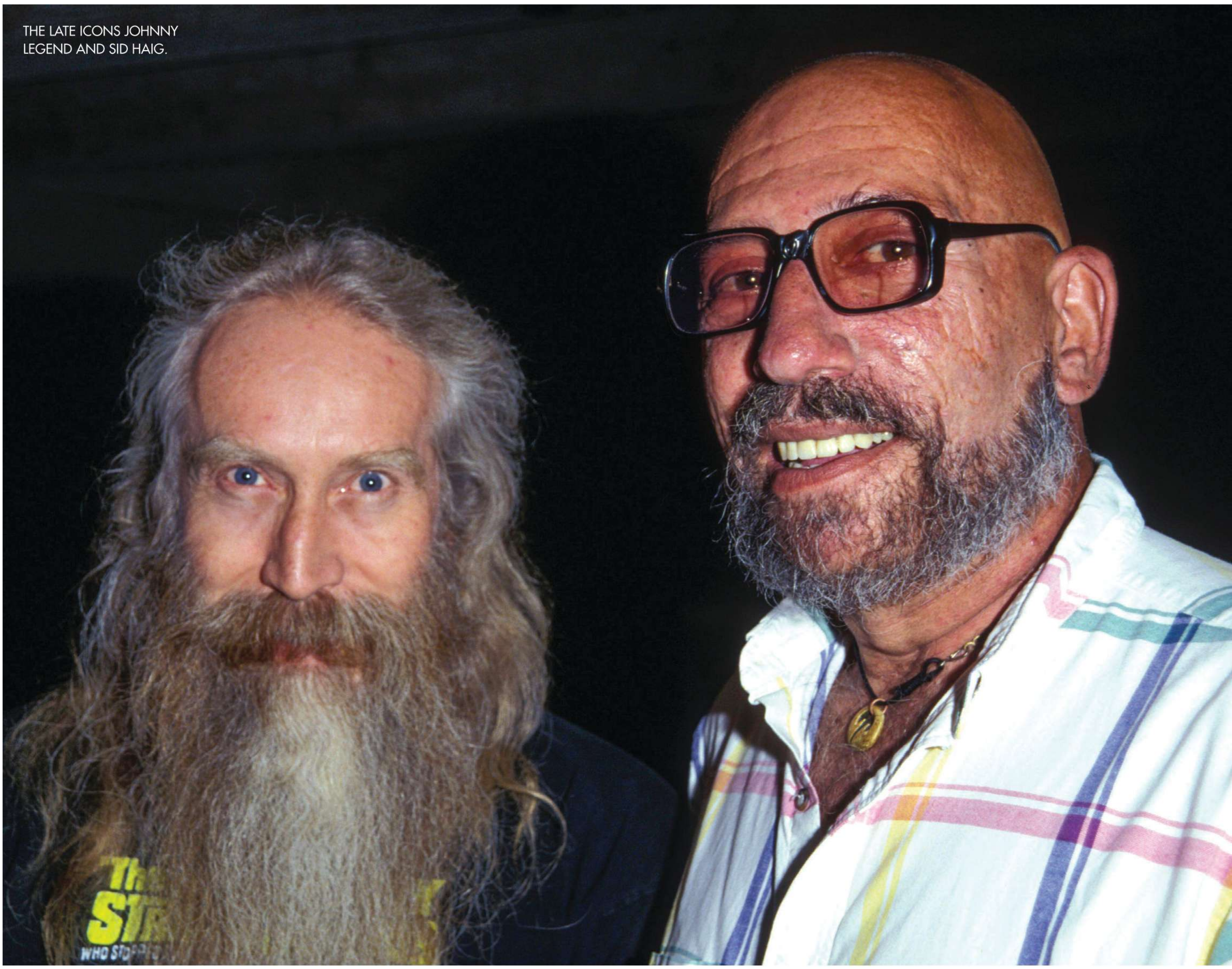
When David McDonnell took over editing FANGORIA with issue #51, he put together a fresh set of writers' guidelines, which were mailed to potential contributors. In the section "Wanted! More Articles Like…," Dave cited Johnny Legend's "I Remember Tor" memory piece from Fango #22. In that beloved article, writer/musician/actor Legend (d: 1/2/26) recalled his childhood friendship with neighbor Tor Johnson, star of Ed Wood's notorious *Bride of the Monster* and *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, among others. As editor, I reenlisted Johnny for set journals when he acted in *Bride of Re-Animator* (FANGORIA #93) and *Severed Ties* (FANGORIA HORROR SPECTACULAR #8).

I first encountered Johnny at Eric Caidin's much-missed Hollywood Book & Poster Co. shop on La Brea Avenue in 1986. He was quite the character with his gangly frame, long stringy gray hair, and unkempt beard. With a manic energy, he enjoyed telling stories of Tinseltown's seedier side. Plus, the man wrote my favorite novelty song, "Pencil Neck Geek," for wrestler Freddie Blassie and directed his (and Andy Kaufman's) satirical doc *My Breakfast with Blassie*.

We all got a kick out of the Rockabilly Rasputin's LA Fango con appearances, including the *Spider Baby* reunion he hosted and his hilarious "Worst Film" announcements during our original FANGORIA Chainsaw Awards presentations.

It later made sense to cast Johnny as the demented Preacher in FANGORIA Films' 1992 *Severed Ties*. He was family by then. "His [audition] self-tape was deranged and perfect for the part," recalls director Damon Santostefano. "Johnny was a sweet guy and was capable of dislocating his nose to look uglier for the part!"

Tony Todd, Udo Kier, Scott Spiegel, and Johnny Legend all left their mark on the genre, FANGORIA, and me. See you guys on the other side. 💀



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THE LATE ICONS JOHNNY LEGEND AND SID HAIG.

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Exordium

PHYSICAL MEDIA FOREVER

A home video library is a valuable research tool, a crucial form of historical custodianship, and a thumb in the eye to the impermanent whims of streaming.

It probably won't surprise anyone reading this that I'm a big physical media collector, and so are a number of my friends. Whenever a Blu-ray label, usually one of the boutiques, has an online sale (often 50 percent off), there will subsequently be posts on my social media feed from those fellow devotees, sharing pictures of the 10 or 20 or more discs they snagged at those bargain prices. I have to admit, even now I sometimes look at those pics and all those titles and think, "Are you ever actually going to watch all of those?"

And then I look at the many discs on my shelves that still have the shrink-wrap on them. I'm not just talking about Blu-rays; there are DVDs up there that are going on 20 years old and haven't yet been freed from their plastic shrouds. And it reminds me that this kind of collecting isn't just about having the movies on hand that you'll want to revisit again and again.

The excuse I sometimes use for holding onto so many old discs… well, one is "It's not hoarding, it's collecting. It isn't hoarding when it's curated!" More seriously, I keep them all around in part because they can be handy for research. I never know when a writing or video project will lead me to pull some vintage title off the shelf that I haven't looked at in forever. While prepping for my current documentary project *Slasher Trash*, for example, I wanted to check out *Mahakaal*, an Indian variation on *A Nightmare on Elm Street* that a couple of our interviewees would be discussing. And there it

PHOTO BY BRUNO GUERRERO

was on Mondo Macabro's long-out-of-print *Bollywood Horror Collection Vol. 3*. I probably hadn't watched that DVD since it was first released in 2009, but I was very glad to have it on hand.

Beyond that personal advantage, there's a much broader motivation for assembling such a large home-video library. There are a number of movies in there that I've never seen before, and have always wanted to see… and I'll get to them at some point. And in general, more than just the desire to sit down and revisit old favorites, it's about creating a museum of cinema in your own home — a monument of sorts to an art form you're passionate about. You may never watch all those Blu-rays you accumulate, but having them there is a way of preserving those old titles — and new ones — as the visual-entertainment world goes through constant changes. It has been commented on many times by many others that physical media has a permanence you don't get on streaming, where, to paraphrase Joe Bob Briggs, any movie can get eliminated at any time. And as each new delivery system inevitably becomes dominated by the big spenders and the major studios, it can be comforting to know that that '70s drive-in classic or microbudget SOV favorite is safe in its little case in your TV room.

Indeed, the studios moving on from Blu-ray to focus more energies on streaming — while the streamers themselves produce the kind of big-ticket features that were once the studios' province — has left the field open for boutique labels to gloriously take over the market. Movies that once existed only as battered prints on the drive-in circuit now look better than ever, with remarkable arrays of video and packaging extras… but then, if you're a devotee, you don't need me to tell you that. (Some companies are also giving this A-grade treatment to movies from the studio vaults that those studios themselves apparently don't want to put the effort into.)

What I can say is that this trend (and may it never die out) is especially meaningful to those of us old enough to remember the days when there was no medium by which you could have your choice of movies at your fingertips. As a budding film fanatic in the '70s, I would sometimes think, *Wouldn't it be great if you could have your own private screening room to see anything you choose at any time?* Back then, we were at the mercy of whatever the networks and syndicated TV stations would broadcast, in edited-for-television form, and at least a couple of generations of us would scour *TV Guide* magazine's listings of every movie set to air that coming week. The rise of cable movie channels around the turn of the '80s allowed us to see scary movies uncut on the tube, but it was still according to their schedule (and still only in fullscreen, which was a whole other issue…).

Then the rise of VHS during my early teen years gave us not only a fresh freedom of choice ("Watch what you want when you want" was one promotional slogan), but the opportunity to build our own little libraries of beloved flicks. The big deal for me was when a friend became the first person I knew to get not only a VCR in his home, but *two* VCRs, which meant he could dub copies of store-rented cassettes for himself, me and others. (This was when the original tapes were prohibitively expensive, before the days of "sell-through.") This pal would dupe practically everything he rented, even stuff he probably had no intention of revisiting much, or at all. But the simple, and new, notion of having such a wide slate of movies under one's own roof was exciting in and of itself.

That feeling was only amplified when DVDs came along, offering not only markedly improved visual quality but a frequent wealth of bonus supplements. Laserdiscs had come first, of course, but those were rather costly items, which could discourage building a vast collection of them. DVDs were cheaper, and their special editions took up less space, making them more attractive for impulse buying. Those extra features were a key factor behind that impulse, which I thought of as "*Lost in Space* syndrome" in the early days of the format. The DVD of the unfortunate *Space* feature film was one of the first I encountered that was a super-duper special edition, with two audio commentaries, deleted scenes, featurettes, etc. They almost seduced me into purchasing the disc — until I thought, "Wait… it's *Lost in Space*."

That memory comes up on occasion when someone posts a shot of their latest Blu-ray sale haul, or I'm at a brick-and-mortar like Bridgeport, CT's, wonderful The Archive, and I see someone pick up a disc of some less-than-classic movie or other. And beyond the fact that everyone's tastes are different, I realize that even though that flick may not be good, it's now theirs, and that owning any entry in film history is part of keeping it alive. 💀

PHOTO BY JASON KAUZLARICH

SceneQueen

MY FAVORITE HORROR ROLES

THE DEFINITIVE ANSWER TO A QUESTION OUR CORRESPONDENT HAS BEEN ASKED MANY, MANY TIMES.

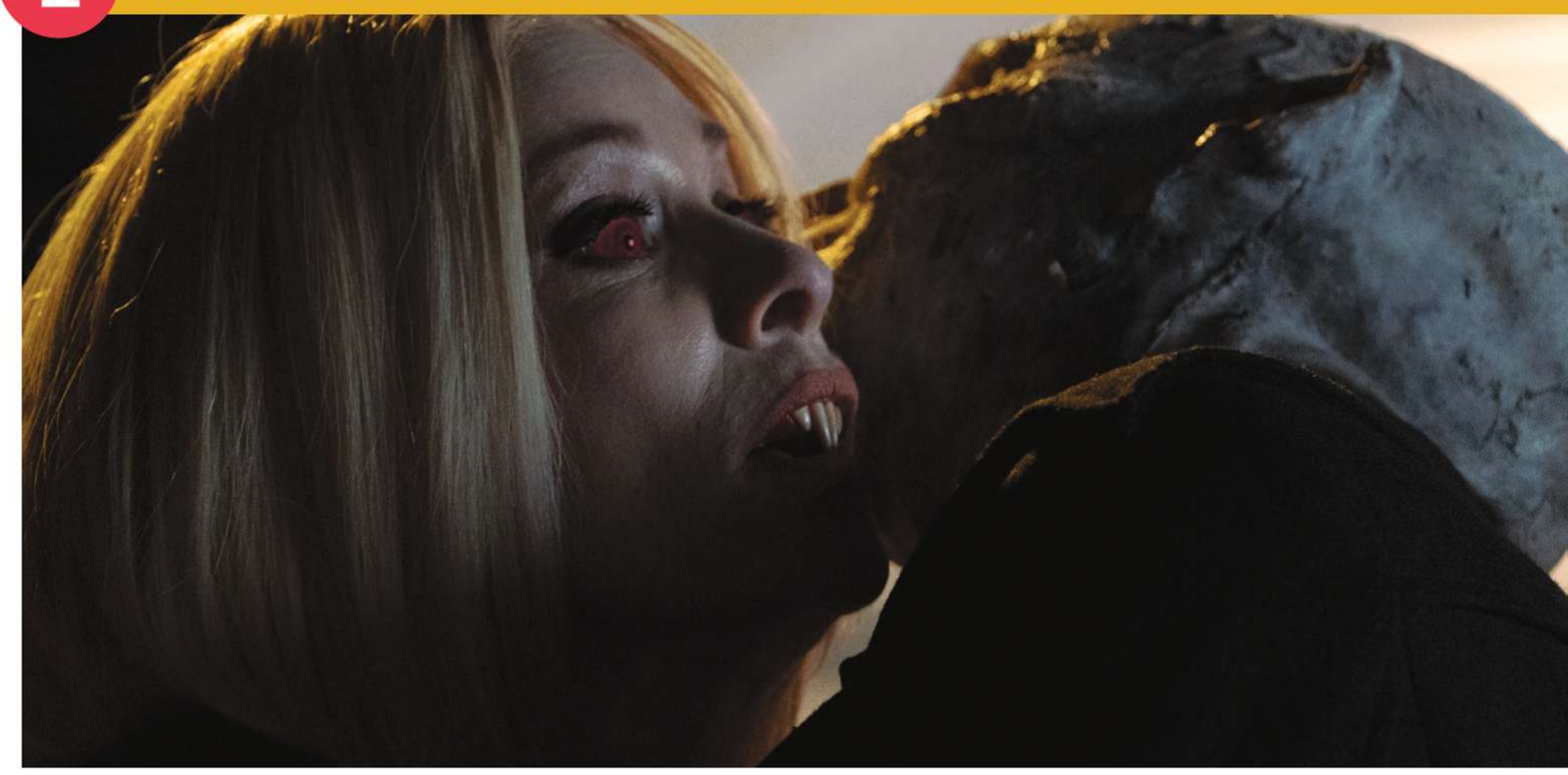
BY BARBARA CRAMPTON

I'm often asked at conventions what my favorite role is. And when I say *Jakob's Wife*, people reply, "Oh, really? What's that?"

Everyone expects me to say *Re-Animator*, and *Re-Animator* is, of course, Stuart Gordon's seminal film and the one that he's most known for, but it wasn't my favorite role. I do love Meg – she's a very smart voice-of-reason character in this crazy, zany horror-comedy, but my character didn't really drive the narrative at all. Meg is more reactionary to everybody else's shenanigans in the film. So I can't say that it's one of my favorite roles, but it's definitely one of the roles that gave me my career, and I'm very grateful for that opportunity.

But without further ado, *these* are my three favorite horror roles:

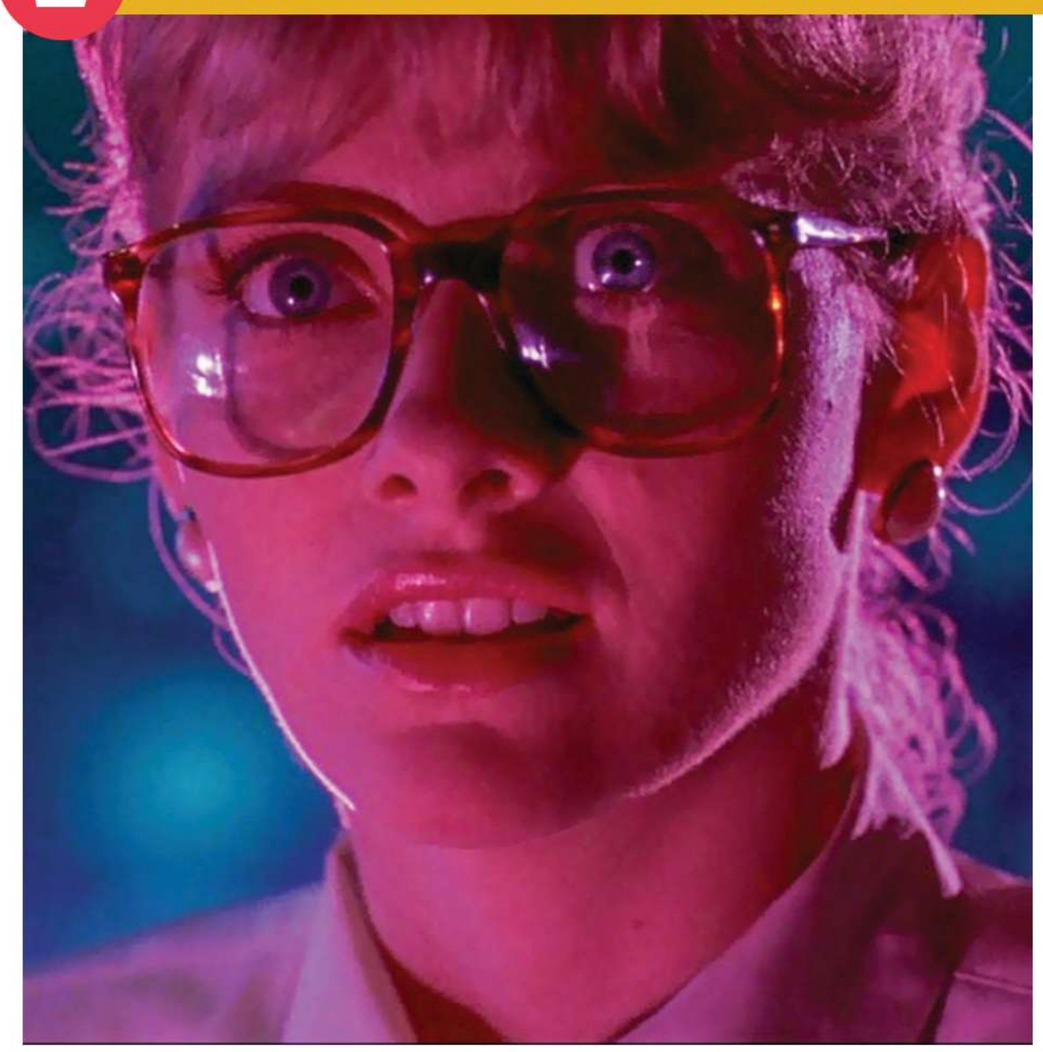
1 ANNE FEDDER IN *JAKOB'S WIFE*



I've always wanted to play a classic character like Anne. This character more closely aligns with who I am as a person than any other film I've done. When the script was first sent to me, I really took to it, but it was also further developed for me after I agreed to the role. There are some moments in the film that are representative of my own marriage, and what it was like coming back to the horror genre after taking a break for a while and reinvesting in my career. When Anne is bitten by a vampire and then reinvents herself, I really responded to those metaphors.

I was also able to work so closely with my co-star Larry Fessenden, whom I adore. We shared a lot about our own marriages and explored what a long-term relationship meant to each of us. It was just fulfilling in so many ways. I loved working so closely with director Travis Stevens – I had worked with him and Larry both on Ted Geoghegan's *We Are Still Here* (my close fourth favorite!), and then Travis did some rewriting of this script for his own fun sensibilities, and he was interested in the vampire lore. Travis' direction is cheeky in a really interesting, artistic way. There were so many wonderful elements that came together to make this my favorite role.

2 DR. KATHERINE McMICHAELS IN *FROM BEYOND*

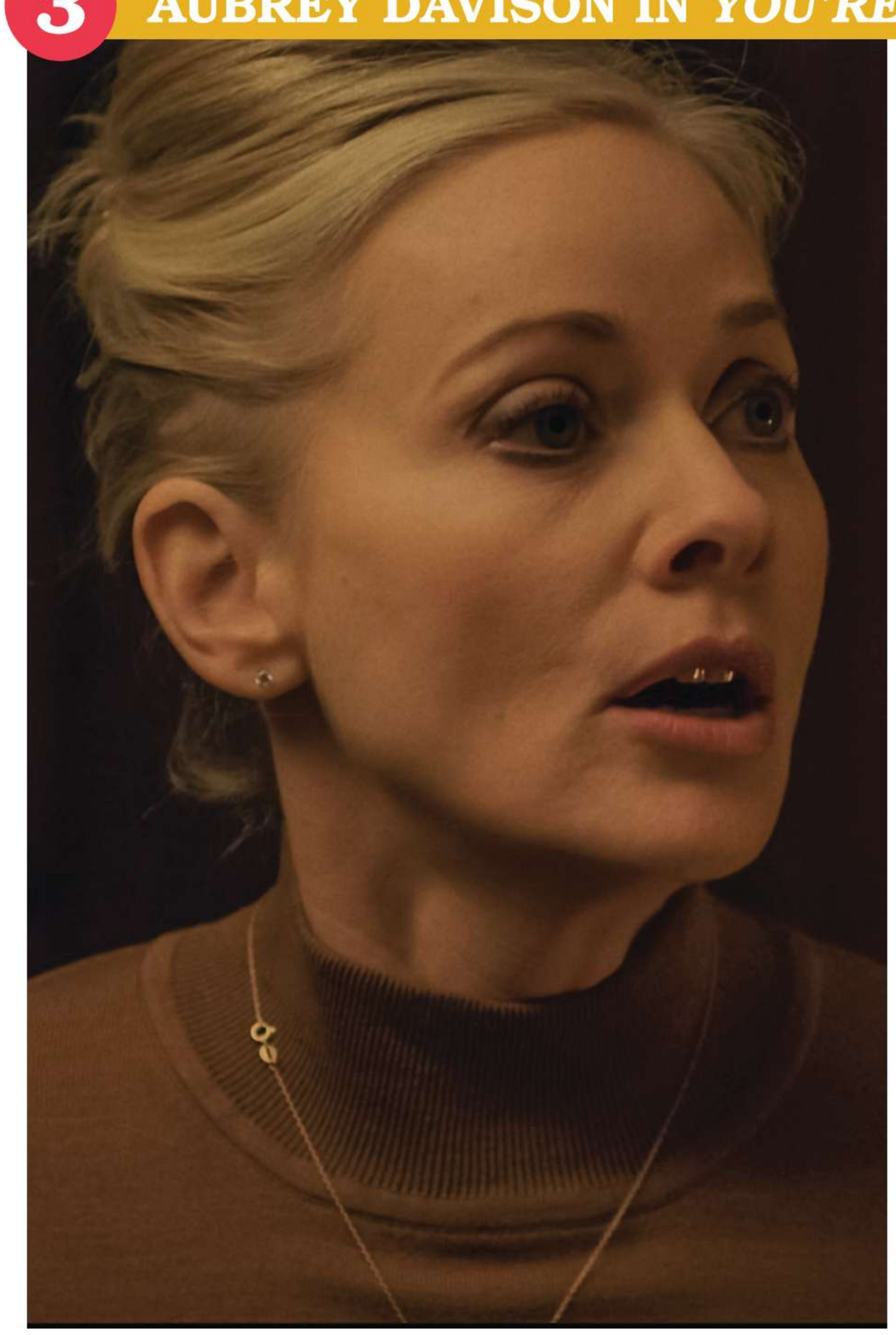


Screenwriter Dennis Paoli said to me recently, "Your role in *From Beyond* was payback for what we did to you in *Re-Animator*. You were pretty fearless in *Re-Animator*, so Stuart and I thought, 'We've got to give her something really great for this next movie." And they did.

I was nominated for a Saturn Award for my role in *From Beyond*, but I was up against some pretty powerhouse performances from 1986, and Sigourney Weaver won for *Aliens*. But Katherine is my close second favorite role because she gave me the opportunity to play so many different colors in the span of one movie: the repressed psychiatrist, then trying to be the person that saves this young man, then going into my own psyche and delving into what is beyond the mind in my own sphere. And then becoming this sexually self-actualized woman, because of the way the pineal gland affects that part of the brain and emotions.

How many times am I ever going to get a role like that? I don't know if I've ever had a role like Katherine since. I love all the roles that I do, but Katherine is special because I got to do so many things within one film.

3 AUBREY DAVISON IN *YOU'RE NEXT*



I didn't have a big role in *You're Next*, I was a supporting character, but it's the role that brought me back to horror in my second round of my career. And that role and film made me understand that I wanted to reinvest myself in the horror genre. That's when I realized, "Oh, these are my people, the horror community and the fans."

There was something so magical and special about *You're Next*, working with writer Simon Barrett and director Adam Wingard, and working with the cast – Sharni Vinson, Joe Swanberg, Amy Seimetz, Ti West, AJ Bowen – and the producers Keith Calder and Jessica Wu. Everybody in that film was just so immersed, and I loved the creative process. Working on it, it seemed as if each person was more talented than the next; they were all blowing me away.

It was an electric set, with everybody on their game, and a lot of them came out of the mumblegore movement, so there was a lot of ad-libbing on set. I hadn't experienced that before, the freedom to do what we felt in the moment. Adam was so adept at steering us very gently in the direction that he wanted us to go, but giving the latitude to experiment and be free. It was so thrilling.

And then when it premiered at TIFF, that was one of the highlights of my life, walking out into the lobby and seeing all the different distributors on their phones saying, "We have to buy this movie. This is an amazing movie. Oh my God, you have to see this." There was a bidding war! I was literally shaking, my knees were weak, and I was on very high heels and I didn't think I'd be able to stand up all night. It was amazing. It was simply one of the best experiences of my entire life and career. 💀

DAMIAN McCARTHY ON HOKUM

THE DIRECTOR OF *ODDITY* TELLS US WHY HIS NEW FILM ISN'T A BUNCH OF... WELL, YOU KNOW.

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD

Damian McCarthy's genre cinema is defined in no small part by the spaces in which he sets his horrors. The house of deteriorating rooms in *Caveat* (2020), the detailed stonework-and-wood mansion interiors of *Oddity* (2024), and now the Bilbery Woods Hotel in *Hokum* bespeak the remarkable attention to detail McCarthy and his team bring to his films. *Hokum*, which NEON releases May 1, also continues the Irish writer/director's propensity for combining occult and human horrors.

Adam Scott stars as Ohm Bauman, an author of dark fantasy fiction who checks into the Bilbery Woods in the remote wilds of Ireland, on a personal mission connected to his troubled past. As he arrives, an old gentleman is relating the legend of a local witch to a couple of kids — presaging some, but not all, of the frightening discoveries Ohm will make within the hotel's walls, particularly in the Honeymoon Suite. Once again, McCarthy merges the personal with the paranormal in *Hokum*, with settings and props you feel like you can reach out and touch — along with some potent jump-scares, accentuated by a scary score by *Conjuring/Insidious* veteran Joseph Bishara.

Hokum is even more "Irish," in a way, than _Oddity_ or _Caveat_, with its sense of the place and its people and its history.

That's very much intentional. *Oddity* felt a little bit more vague, in terms of the setting and when exactly it was taking place. I tried to carry that over into *Hokum*, but definitely wanted to lean more into the idea of the outsider, an American coming to Ireland. And instead of it being super-welcoming, which I guess it's known for, what would it be like to come across a particular hotel where the people are all a bit strange and maybe a little suspect. I thought it would be more interesting to lean into that, and there might be a dark comedic streak there that I could play with.

It's shot around where I'm from, so I'm very familiar with all those locations. Even those scenes at the start where Ohm's driving to the hotel, I've been on those roads for 40 years. So I was just trying to write stuff I love into the film, I guess. I don't know if it'll do a whole lot for Irish tourism, since the people he comes across are a little bit strange, though I think it still looks nice.

There's a great, tactile feeling to the settings, especially the interiors. How did you and your production designer, Til Frohlich, create that?

Til had loads of cool ideas about how the hotel could look, and how to seamlessly incorporate the sets we'd be building into the location. It was very much about talking to everybody from the start, production as well as costume design and props, and it was like, the most interesting prop wins. The idea was, don't tie it to any specific period, like with the Honeymoon Suite; nobody's supposed to have been up there in a few years. We just kept it all vague and as interesting as possible, and gave everything a lot of texture. We tried to lean into ghost stories. I always tell people to imagine it's like an old-time lantern-lit ghost story, with lots of crushed blacks and warms, and doesn't ever feel too cold. I felt that with that design and the props selection, it would make the film more rewatchable. You know, make it kind of a cozy hotel in some ways. Even though it's hopefully scary and there's frightening imagery in it, I was trying to balance it out so the hotel also feels believable as a place where you would check in and relax.

SIDE-SLEEPER OHM BAUMAN (ADAM SCOTT, ABOVE AND RIGHT) IS FEELING THE WALLS CLOSE IN.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEON

WHAT'S THE OPPOSITE OF A "PRECIOUS MOMENTS" FIGURINE? THIS IS THAT.

The props were by Paul McDonnell, who designed the Wooden Man in *Oddity*. A lot of that stuff had to be specially built, like the clock and the figurines and the diorama. A number of them had to be created at a bigger scale as well, because when we would try to get in there with a macro camera and shoot them very, very tight, it wasn't as interesting. Paul was great, and had a very interesting take on all this stuff.

Joseph Bishara's music and *Hokum*'s sound design are also very striking and eerie. How did that all come together?

Obviously, anybody who likes horror films has heard and is a fan of Joseph's work. He's done so much great stuff, so when the chance came to work with him, I absolutely jumped at it. At the same time, it's not a typical Joseph Bishara score. Sometimes with anybody creative, you try to give them little nudges away from something. Like, let's say, the sequence where Ohm is trying to signal Jerry, David Wilmot's character. He's trying to ring this bell to get his attention, and where we were with that initially felt very scary and suspenseful. And I was trying to guide him toward, well, maybe forget about horror for this moment. Maybe it should be something almost farcical, with a kind of humor to it,

FANGO TRIP ADVISOR SAYS: YOU SEE THIS SORT OF THING IN A HOTEL LOBBY, YOU STAY SOMEWHERE ELSE.

and play into that. He would take that and run with it and come back with something that really worked.

And then obviously when we needed horror, his classic strings and that wonderful, disturbing stuff he does, he had it right there. A few of the other pieces of music we have are a mix of local Irish people and one or two bands I know. And then we have a track by Moby at the end, which is fantastic.

I also worked with Steve Fanagan, a sound designer here in Ireland. Steve's great because it's not just horror he's done. He's worked on dramas and comedies, so he has a very wide range of experience, so whereas I might be thinking, let's make it scary, scary, scary, he'd be able to soften it at times and build it back up. He was able to not just go for constant horror the whole way through, and find that balance between it feeling a little bit light before suddenly things start to get heavy again.

OHM (MORE LIKE "OHMYGOD," AMIRITE?) GOES THROUGH IT IN *HOKUM*. AND WE SUSPECT THIS OTHER PERSON (BELOW) IS PART OF THE "IT" THAT OHM GOES THROUGH.

"I DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL DO A WHOLE LOT FOR IRISH TOURISM."

- Damian McCarthy

One of the things that struck me about *Hokum* is that there's not a whole lot of exposition regarding the folklore. A lot of films like this will have the obligatory character who explains the mythology, but this one leaves it up to the viewer to put it all together.

Yeah, with horror films, there's usually that moment where the protagonist is in trouble, and around the 45-minute mark, they meet somebody who's been through it before and can explain to them what's going on. I just felt that with Cob's [Brendan Conroy] story at the start, where he talks about a witch in the woods — that's it, and we're good. Hopefully that will keep the audience's imagination more engaged, and they'll start making up their own story about what exactly she could be doing. There's still enough there that if people don't want to work like that, it's really all you need to know — those few pieces of information that Cob sets up.

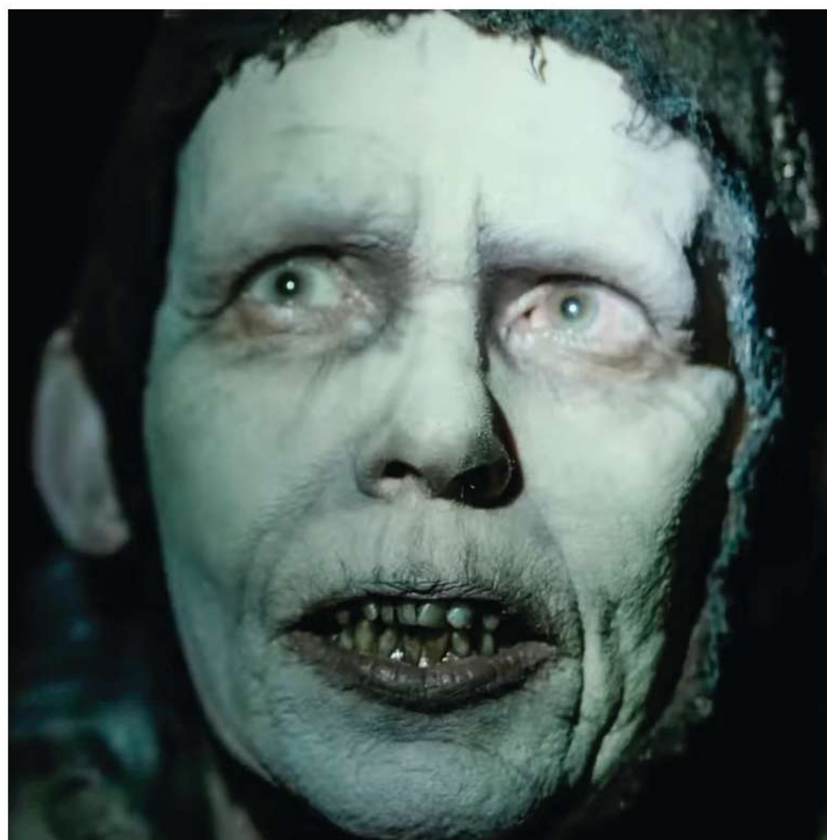
Since Ohm is a genre creative, was there anything autobiographical that you worked into his character or his story?

I think there is, in terms of the solitude of writing — not to the extent he goes through, but yeah. It's kind of hard not to. With every character I write, I believe there's always some small part of me in there somewhere. Maybe also — again, not to the extremes that he is — being a little bit of a loner, a little bit quieter. There's a sense with Ohm that he spends a lot of time lost in his work, which I can relate to a little bit.

You take a bit of a risk in that Ohm, as the protagonist we follow, is not always totally sympathetic. Can you talk about how you and Scott approached that side of the character?

Well, I told Adam that Ohm is very internal, and he's not the warmest; he's a little prickly around strangers. Adam likes that, though. He said that he's played those types of characters before, and he can kind of get away with it. Even though Ohm's a little bit cold to people, and if somebody likes his book and tries to compliment him, he doesn't take it well — I just find that I like those characters. I like people who are troubled and not so nice, but they're trying to change. I read somewhere that likability is no guarantee of audience engagement; just because a character is friendly and nice to everybody, it's not necessarily going to make you want them to succeed. Whereas if they're at least interesting, you'll be on board, and I just felt that Ohm has an interesting arc. He's not super-nice and friendly suddenly at the end, but there's definitely a change in him. 💀

This conversation was edited for length and clarity.



BE CAREFUL WHO YOU WISH FOR

Inde Navarrette delivers a horror performance for the ages in Curry Barker's OBSESSION.

By Isaac Feldberg

NIKKI (INDE NAVARRETTE) IS BEAR'S (MICHAEL JOHNSTON) DREAM GIRL… BUT BEAR BOUGHT HIMSELF A *MONKEY'S PAW*-TYPE SITUATION.

When Curry Barker set out to make *Obsession*, he wasn't chasing jump-scares or shock for shock's sake. He was chasing a feeling: the slow, skin-crawling discomfort that comes from recognizing something of yourself in a character you desperately want to look away from.

At first, it's easy to sympathize with Bear (Michael Johnston), a shy and sensitive guy who's long nursed a crush on his childhood friend Nikki (Inde Navarrette) but struggles to tell her how he really feels. After yet another failed attempt to profess his love, Bear miserably wishes for romantic reciprocation. Only this time, he does so while in possession of a supernatural novelty toy called a "One Wish Willow" — snap the branch in two, and your wish comes true — that turns out to work exactly as advertised.

Suddenly, Nikki's all over Bear, and he finds himself living out his fantasy. This new Nikki is insatiably affectionate, eager to proclaim endless devotion, and spending so much time at his place she effectively moves in. Everything's perfect — except for when Nikki seems to snap out of it, screaming in terror as if jolting awake from a nightmare before she slips back under the spell of her relentless attachment.

"I'd always wanted to do a horror movie that played with the topic of obsession," says Barker, previously best known for his sketch comedy channel That's a Bad Idea and $800 found-footage serial killer feature *Milk & Serial*. "I found it intriguing, that question of how far love could go — or how scarily it could go wrong."

"I'M ALWAYS TRYING TO CHASE THAT HEEBIE-JEEBIES MOMENT. THAT'S THE NEW JUMP-SCARE."

- CURRY BARKER -

Inspiration struck when he least expected it. Barker was watching live television with friends and ended up catching a *Simpsons* rerun: the "Treehouse of Horror II" episode featuring a monkey's paw that grants wishes with disastrous consequences. "That struck me as a cool way in: what if it was a wish that went wrong?" Barker recalls. "We've seen that idea — be careful what you wish for — many times before, but I decided I'd try to do it differently."

This pitch won over producer James Harris (*Fall*, *47 Meters Down*), whose Tea Shop Productions banner came on board alongside producers Haley N. Johnson and Christian Mercuri, enabling Barker to work with a larger budget and more conventional crew setup. That also allowed Barker to focus on casting his leads. The process was rigorous, but he leaned toward actors who brought something surprising to the audition. With Johnston, known for MTV's *Teen Wolf*, it was the unique quality of his voice, which could sound endearing but also unsettling. "He had this timidity to him, this innocence I wanted Bear to have — because he's not that innocent," Barker says. "I wanted him to have this inherent innocence that's almost false."

Navarrette was also known for television roles — including *Superman*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOCUS FEATURES / © 2026 FOCUS FEATURES LLC

BEAR WISHED FOR NIKKI'S UNDYING LOVE; HE DIDN'T SPECIFY ANYTHING ABOUT HER BEING COVERED IN VOMIT, SWEAT AND BODILY WASTE. THAT'S AMORE!

& Lois — but hadn't been afforded an opportunity like Nikki. "It was so hard to find an actress who could do scary scenes and more natural moments," Barker recalls. "That was nerve-wracking: if the girl doesn't work, the movie doesn't work."

In her audition, Navarrette nailed two key scenes: one a quiet monologue in Bear's car where Nikki confides in him about her writing ambitions, the other a louder scene in a restaurant where Nikki derails a date with Bear. Still, "I didn't know everything she was capable of until the day came," Barker admits.

For Navarrette, it was important to approach Nikki from a "non-judgmental place," rather than intentionally playing possessed. "I wanted to tap into that side of everybody we try to push away," she says. "When you have an obsession for somebody, and it's unhealthy, it's rooted in insecurity, which can stem into jealousy and so much else, but because it's so volatile, you never know where it's going... That side is a part of everybody. This takes it to the umpteenth degree, but it is a human emotion. That's really how I wanted to play Nikki; we can all see ourselves in her, which allowed me the freedom to go batshit."

"WE CAN ALL SEE OURSELVES IN HER, WHICH ALLOWED ME THE FREEDOM TO GO BATSHIT."

- INDE NAVARRETTE -

Physicality mattered when it came to embodying Nikki's disturbingly affectionate actions, which escalate alongside her unconditional, ickily non-consensual obsession. With little time to work on choreography before filming, Navarrette focused less on deliberating over precise expressions and movements than on ensuring her character's tortured emotional state felt as real as possible.

"It was very *au naturelle*, just me and Curry poppin' and lockin', having a dance battle with each other to try to figure out which movements looked most insane," Navarrette recalls. Experimenting until something felt wrong enough was exactly what Barker wanted. "I'm always trying to chase that heebie-jeebies moment," he adds. "That's the new jump-scare."

In one scene, Bear awakens to discover Nikki lurking in the corner of his bedroom, watching him sleep, whispering that she doesn't like her dreams. Creeping out of the shadows, closer and closer, then vanishing and reappearing with a flower vase in front of her face, she leaves Bear paralyzed with fear. The next morning, trying and failing to reassure him all is well, Nikki breaks into an exaggerated, frozen smile that lingers long after Bear leaves for work.

"Curry one day asked me to work in the mirror, and I did it once, and I got sleep paralysis because I scared

the shit out of myself — so I never did that again," the actress says, laughing. "But I've always been very expressive; generally, whatever I feel inside, people see on the surface."

In dialing up Nikki's behavior as her obsession worsens, Navarrette also found herself leaning more on Johnston for support. "Obviously, we have to take each other to places nobody should ever be taken to, outside of the acting world," she says. "Michael was an angel. I love that man. He just held me when I needed to be held, metaphorically — and one time physically, because it could get really intense, and it's the people that surround you who allow you to be free and to feel safe."

This was crucial during a scene at a house party, where a drinking game between friends takes a terrifying turn. Once Nikki elects to read aloud a passage from a novel she's working on, the unsuspecting group hears a sickening account of incestuous relations between siblings (complete with creepy little voices that Navarrette commits to with insidious glee).

"It's Nikki, speaking through the obsessed version of Nikki, about how she feels about Bear, but then obsessed Nikki is twisting her words," she explains. "When she starts to talk about Hansel and Gretel being brother and sister — as is the horrific nature of incest — she's trying to say that she thinks of Bear like her brother; then, obsessed Nikki's take is that she's going to be with Bear anyway, no matter how messed-up it is, because she's so in love with him.

"I'm not going to lie — I had everybody look away," she adds. "During that scene, I kicked people out of the room. I don't usually do that, but I was just like, 'Dude, no, we've all become such good friends, and this is gross.'"

As for her worst day on set? There's no question: "I'm going to try to tell this story without gagging," says Navarrette. (She almost succeeds.) By the end of the film, Nikki has become so malnourished that she experiences intense nausea. "She's not taking care of herself; we had this idea that, if Nikki is not being perceived by Bear, she doesn't exist," Navarrette explains. "In this scene where she's [cradling] Bear, she vomits everywhere; doing that practically would mean me having to actually throw up on Michael, and that obviously wasn't going to happen, so they taped a vomit tube to my mouth. The problem was that it wasn't very strong tape…"

Navarrette pauses, shivers in revulsion, then continues: "So, they call action, the tape detaches, the tube moves, all that vomit shoots down my throat, and I throw up for real next to Michael. The crew's just looking at me like, 'Whoa, Inde, you *know* that's not where you're supposed to throw up!' I don't ever lose my temper, but this was the one time I put up my middle finger, like, 'Give me a second, please!' Just the *velocity* of it coming out of the vomit tube… It was so bad."

As they kept filming, Navarrette couldn't dislodge this image from her mind — or the taste from her mouth — so producer Haley N. Johnson placed a bucket next to Johnston, just out of frame. "In between takes, I kept throwing up in that bucket, remembering what had happened to me five minutes earlier, and poor Michael was just underneath me, looking up, terrified," she recalls, laughing. "Luckily, we hadn't eaten lunch yet, or else I would have thrown up everything."

For Barker, the project was never more nerve-wracking than while filming a tough-to-watch scene that made obvious his passion for head-smashing. A private conversation in a parked car is stopped dead in its tracks when Nikki runs up, smashes head-first through the window, then slams the driver's head into a brick she positions against the steering wheel, until their skull's crushed to a bloody pulp.

"We only had three fake glass windows. so we had three takes; the first glass window shattered while we were carrying it to set, so then we only had two takes," Barker recalls. "We finally got that window in place, Inde smashed through it, and it worked. On the third take, she smashed through it, and this Styrofoam helping to hold the window up fell into frame, ruining the shot." In the end, there was only one usable take — the one you see in the film.

Barker is already in production on his follow-up feature, *Anything But Ghosts* (it's about "fake ghost hunters who encounter real spirits," he teases). Navarrette, meanwhile, has lined up her next thriller: *Invertigo*, about a group of teenagers trapped on a rollercoaster, hundreds of feet in the air.

Obsession may have been her first taste of horror, but Navarrette knew on set it wouldn't be her last. As harrowing as production could be, she also found channeling Nikki's emotional extremities to be cathartic. "I'd go from screaming and crying and throwing up to singing this song, "I'm Like A Bird," by Nelly Furtado, in between takes… I love it when people ask me, 'How hard was this for you?'" she says, grinning. "I'm like, 'Baby, it wasn't hard — it set me free.'" 💀

MAYBE NEXT TIME WISH FOR LOVE *AND* A MODICUM OF PERSONAL HYGIENE, GUY.

DOUBLE OR NOTHING

KATHRYN NEWTON JOINS SAMARA WEAVING — AND A MURDERERS' ROW OF VILLAINOUS CO-STARS — IN RADIO SILENCE'S

READY OR NOT 2 HERE I COME

BLOOD SISTERS: GRACE (SAMARA WEAVING) AND FAITH (KATHRYN NEWTON) GET MESSY IN THE AMPED-UP SEQUEL.

BY ISAAC FELDBERG

GAME ON: THE NEW PLAYERS (L-R: JUAN PABLO ROMERO, NÉSTOR CARBONELL, VARUN SARANGA, MASA LIZDEK, SHAWN HATOSY, NADEEM UMAR-KHITAB, SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR, DAN BEIRNE, ANTONY HALL AND OLIVIA CHENG) BREAK DOWN THE RULES FOR GRACE AND FAITH.

WITH ONE WEEK TO GO UNTIL FILMING *READY OR NOT 2: HERE I COME*, THE ANTICIPATED SEQUEL TO HER CULT-HORROR HIT, SAMARA WEAVING WAS NOT READY.

"I was in the hospital for a back injury, and I couldn't walk," the actress tells FANGORIA. Anyone who saw Weaving's breakthrough performance as Grace, a bride tasked with staying alive until dawn on her wedding night as her new in-laws hunt her down, can understand why this posed a problem for the high-octane follow-up, again directed by Tyler Gillett and Matt Bettinelli-Olpin (together Radio Silence).

"I was seeing three different kinds of doctors every day, trying to heal, and we didn't know what I'd be able to do," she recalls. "I couldn't lift anything. I couldn't even sit, and I was on all these painkillers, muscle relaxants, and steroids. It was awful." An MRI scan revealed three bulging discs in Weaving's spine, one dead and blackened. The pain was agonizing, and there was no clear cause; the actress humorously acknowledges "wearing corsets and bad shoes at work" didn't help. Still, she chalks the injury up to a combination of genetics, bad luck, and entering her thirties.

FAITH'S NEW HERE, SO SHE MAYBE DOESN'T REALIZE THIS HAPPENS A LOT?

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES, BY PIEF WEYMAN

“WE KNOW HOW THESE MOVIES WILL GO — SOMEBODY’S GOING TO DIE — BUT MY OPPORTUNITY AS AN ACTOR IS TO SURPRISE THE AUDIENCE WITH MY CHOICES, TO KEEP THEM ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEAT, CONSTANTLY WONDERING WHAT’S GOING TO HAPPEN.”
- KATHRYN NEWTON

Factor in that *Ready or Not 2* picks up moments after Grace survives an all-out attack from the Le Domas clan, only to discover her victory in their deadly game of “hide-and-seek” has initiated the next level — a “double-or-nothing” round that brings four rival families down on her head, all competing to claim the High Seat of the Council that secretly controls the entire world — and you can understand why Weaving’s condition had the co-directors considering worst-case scenarios.

“Three days before we started filming, Tyler and I were basically holding our breath and going, ‘Fuck, I don’t know how we’re gonna get through this,’” recalls Bettinelli-Olpin. “She could barely stand up. She only gets to lay down in one scene, in the hospital at the very beginning, and then she’s running for the whole rest of the movie!”

But the weekend before filming, Weaving made a miraculous recovery. “I woke up on Saturday, and I could move again,” she says, shaking her head. “We were shooting that Monday, and we would have had to cut so much of what we had planned; I actually don’t know what we would have done.”

Radio Silence knew they couldn’t take anything for granted, and they kept an open dialogue with Weaving to ensure she wasn’t being pushed too far physically. “A lot of this film came down to the trust we had in Sam — and that

THAT’S MORE LIKE IT: FAITH GETS INTO THE BLOODY SWING OF THINGS.

WEAPONS OF CHOICE: GRACE AND FAITH HOLD URSULA DANFORTH (GELLAR) AT BAY.

KIP DANFORTH (BEIRNE) FINDS A HUMAN SHIELD (SARAH HILLIER) TO CATCH SOME OF THE COPIOUS SPLATTER.

she had in us — to know our limits," says Gillett. "At the end of the day, filmmaking is a team sport. Everybody has to hold hands and do it together."

Back in 2019, the first *Ready or Not* performed strongly for Searchlight Pictures, but the sequel wasn't put into development until five years later, when audiences showing up *en masse* — some in costume — for the studio's theatrical re-release reaffirmed its cult status. Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett initially decided against directing the sequel, worried about repeating themselves. That changed after they worked with actress Kathryn Newton on *Abigail*, where she played a hacker who ends up battling a bloodthirsty ballerina. A high-energy presence across horror-comedies, also including *Freaky* and *Lisa Frankenstein*, Newton brought ideas to the table to make that character her own — sketching tattoos, designing outfits, even devising a dance sequence — and Radio Silence welcomed them with open arms.

"My goal is to entertain people: always has been, always will be," says Newton. "We know how these movies will go — somebody's going to die — but my opportunity as an actor is to surprise the

THE LAWYER (ELIJAH WOOD) WITH IGNACIO EL CAÍDO (CARBONELL), URSULA (GELLAR) AND TITUS DANFORTH (HATOSY), AND VIRAJ RAJAN (UMAR-KHITAB).

audience with my choices, to keep them on the edge of their seat, constantly wondering what's going to happen."

Bettinelli-Olpin recalls "working with Kathryn on *Abigail* was the lightbulb moment for us; that's what we wanted in this sequel. We wanted Grace to have a sister and for that to be the beating heart of the film. Once that clicked for us, it was easy to get re-energized."

Unlike in the first film, where Grace goes up against the Le Domas family alone, this sequel finds her fighting alongside estranged younger sister Faith (Newton). Bruised, battered, and covered in blood as police find the Le Domas mansion burning behind her, Grace passes out and awakens to find Faith — her emergency contact — at her hospital bedside. Soon thereafter, Faith is abducted alongside Grace at the behest of the manipulative Ursula Danforth (Sarah Michelle Gellar) and her psychopathic twin brother Titus (Shawn Hatosy), whose lavish country club has been chosen as the site of Grace's next ordeal.

Members of other rival families — all extravagantly rich and morally bankrupt as a consequence of deals brokered through the ages with the demonic entity known as Mr. Le Bail — arrive at the property, accompanied by a mysterious advisor, The Lawyer (Elijah Wood), whose knowledge of all things Le Bail ensures that the families will all abide by his rules of engagement, rather than swiftly backstabbing one another in their competing bids for power.

BILL WILKINSON (KEVIN DURAND) GETS THE DROP ON GRACE; FAITH IS NOT VERY HELPFUL JUST YET. THIS MUST BE BEFORE SHE BECOMES A SWORD-WIELDING BADASS.

Handcuffed together, Grace and Faith are soon running for their lives, evading sniper fire across a golf course before going head-to-head with their heavily armed adversaries.

"What we love about our survive-the-night style of storytelling is that there's no off-ramp for any of the characters — or for the audience," says Gillett. Approaching the sequel's story — alongside returning writers Guy Busick and R. Christopher Murphy — as a *Halloween II*-style continuation "had the same energy of *Ready or Not*, its sense of audacity," he adds. "The concept of Grace being victorious, then falling face-first back into the insanity, was so fun."

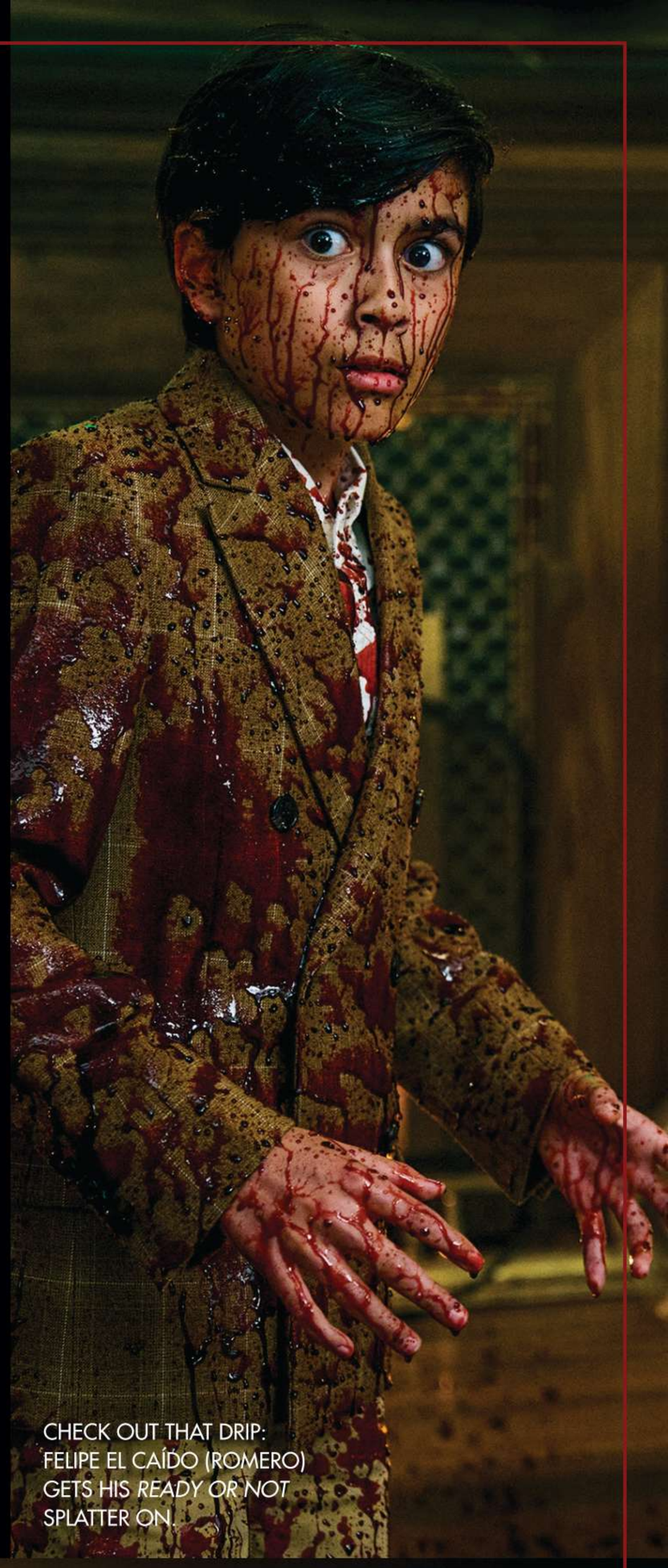
The other catalyst was Faith. "We found real clarity once we realized it was a tale of two sisters, about two characters learning to love each other again," says Gillett."Once it gelled for us there was almost a romantic-comedy structure, the emotion at the heart of it became crystal-clear," adds Bettinelli-Olpin.

As filming got underway, Weaving laced up her yellow Chucks and slipped back into Grace's iconic Victorian bridal gown — sans corset this time. "It was strangely emotional," she recalls. "I walked out in the wedding dress from the first film, and we were all like, 'Why do we want to cry?' It felt so exciting to be making another one, and that meant we'd done something really cool the first time around."

Recruiting a murderers' row of actors to play the rival families — also including Néstor Carbonell, Kevin Durand, Olivia Cheng, Varun Saranga, and David Cronenberg — only upped the on-set energy. It was a "pinch-me moment" for Weaving to find herself "on the ground with Gellar at 4 a.m.," she recalls. "You get home and take a bath, like, 'Wait, what did I do today? Was there a goat involved at some point?'"

Her favorite scene to shoot was a knock-down-drag-out fight between Grace and Francesca El Caido (Maia Jae), once engaged to Alex Le Domas (Adam Brody) and still smarting from their breakup, not to mention his recent demise. When Alex's ex-fiancée emerges in *her* wedding dress, wielding a bazooka, the brides brawl messily through a ballroom as Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart" blasts overhead. "These people are *not* fighters, and they don't know what they're doing," says Weaving, laughing. "It's a bar fight."

Later, when Faith acquires a sword, slinging it over her shoulder, Newton



CHECK OUT THAT DRIP: FELIPE EL CAÍDO (ROMERO) GETS HIS *READY OR NOT* SPLATTER ON.

HEY WE KNOW THAT GUY! PERNILLA (KARA WOOTEN), TITUS AND URSULA VISIT WITH CHESTER DANFORTH (DAVID CRONENBERG).

REUNITED AND IT FEELS SO GOOD: WEAVING, CINEMATOGRAPHER BRETT JUTKIEWICZ AND AND THE RADIO SILENCE BOYS (TYLER GILLETT AND AND MATT BETTINELLI-OLPIN) ON THE SET OF *READY OR NOT 2*.

recalls finding her new favorite weapon. ("That was a rock-star moment," she says.) Weaving stuck to her guns. "I love a shotgun," affirms the actress. "There's something so powerful about it, like kicking in a door."

Few moments in *Ready or Not 2* are more jaw-dropping than its climactic setpiece, referred to on set as the Black Wedding; trading in her white-lace wedding dress for blood-on-black-lace regalia — complete with Gothic choker, courtesy of costume designer Avery Plewes — Grace is forced through a High Council wedding ceremony, the ring at its center granting its wearer control of the society's much-coveted throne.

In classic Radio Silence fashion, this devolves into chaos once Grace turns the tables on her captors, sending them tumbling after the ring into a subterranean pit, where they scrap for supremacy in a grotesque *tableau vivant*. "The absolute need and desire for wealth is ultimately what they kill themselves for," reflects Gillett. "We really love that as a turn for Grace; as heroic as she is, she's just turning the power inward on that group. We talked about that sequence like this classically beautiful Renaissance painting but disgusting, with people of absolute privilege doing the worst and most craven things so they can hold onto power."

This crucial wedding sequence climaxes with a spontaneous combustion so spectacular as to outstrip even the first film's finale. "The big explosion at the end — that's 100% real," says Bettinelli-Olpin. "That's just a *ton* of fucking blood in cannons, under the ground, exploding upward. What you see in the movie is exactly what happened on set."

The special effects team worked to stage bigger, bloodier explosions with as many practical effects as possible, and miniature "meat cannons" (and "meat rifles," held by crew members standing directly off-screen, for close-ups) were devised to blast actors. "It was funny to see the difference from the first one, where they put gooey bananas, jelly, and food coloring in a plastic bag on a plinth, then put some explosives in it," recalls Weaving. "On this one, they had a full demonstration — during which I was high on back meds — of this alien spaceship with big jets, different timers, many levels of blood spray and combustion. They took the tech up a notch."

Newton loved every minute. "You're never ready for that much blood," she enthuses. "You never know, 'Is it going to miss me completely? Is it going straight into my mouth?' There's anticipation but also magic. The last time it hit me, when we were on this staircase, the blood splatter made a perfect crown."

When it came to getting splattered, Weaving had practical advice to share. "Just know you can't break, because resetting is a nightmare, and we don't have the time," she says. "Whatever you do, don't break. Matt and Tyler are loud, they'll start laughing, and you have to be dead serious. When you've just gotten a bunch of shit in your face, it's in your eyes, and you're trying to be really serious, then you hear them giggling, that's the hardest I've had to work on these movies." 💀

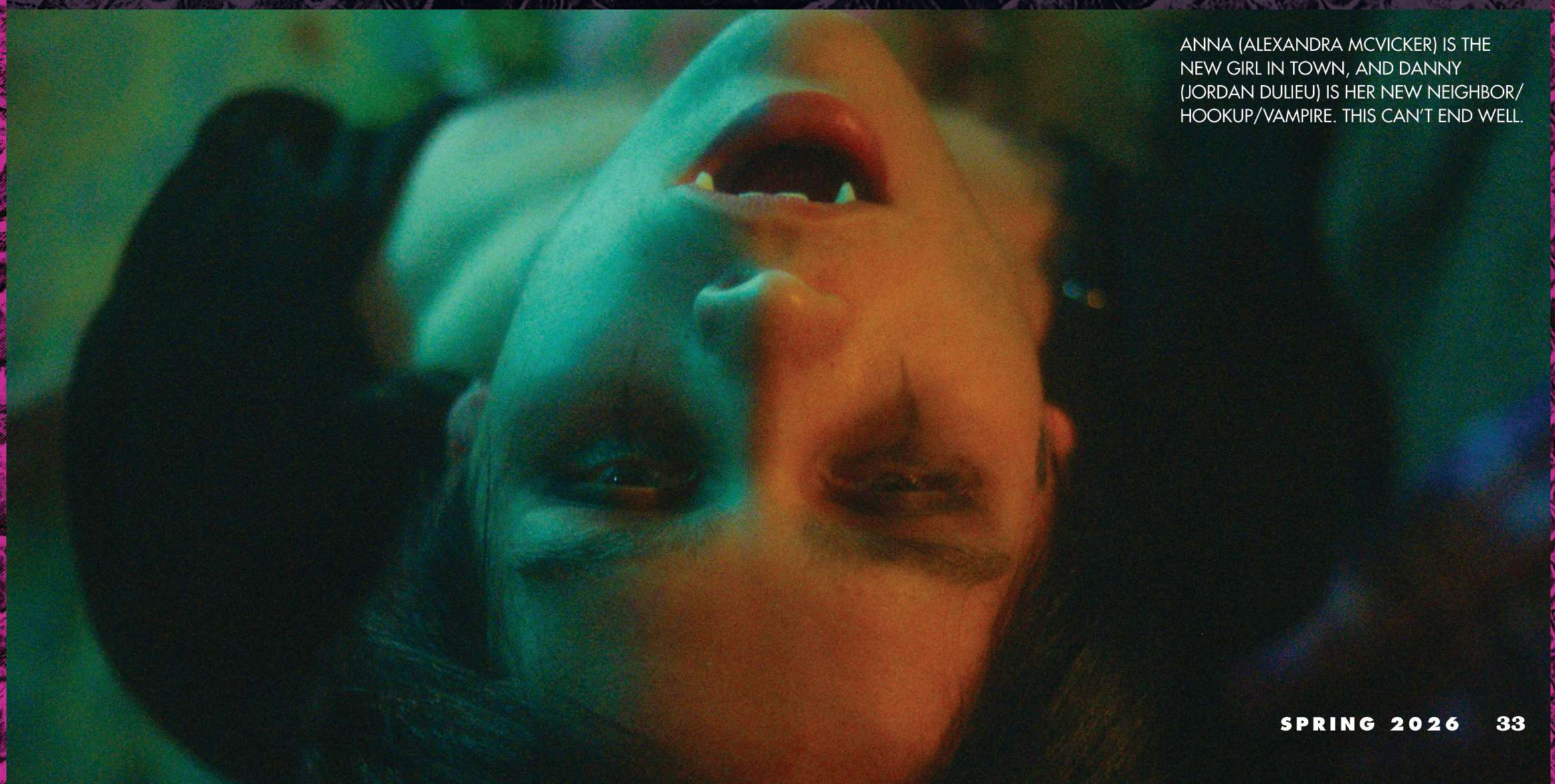
GRACE AND FAITH DRINK A TOAST TO NOT BEING KILLED BY RICH, CREEPY ASSHOLES. AMEN.

CLIMB INSIDE THE SERPENT'S SKIN

ALICE MAIO MACKAY IS BACK WITH A NEW TALE TO SINK YOUR TEETH INTO.

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD

Australian filmmaker Alice Maio Mackay is a week and a half shy of her 21st birthday when FANGORIA interviews her at Montreal's Fantasia International Film Festival, and yet the occasion is the Canadian premiere of her sixth feature. Like her previous works, including *T Blockers* and *Carnage for Christmas*, *The Serpent's Skin* (coming to digital platforms April 21 from Dark Star Pictures following limited theatrical play) combines queer/trans themes with genre trappings.



ANNA (ALEXANDRA MCVICKER) IS THE NEW GIRL IN TOWN, AND DANNY (JORDAN DULIEU) IS HER NEW NEIGHBOR/ HOOKUP/VAMPIRE. THIS CAN'T END WELL.

However, Mackay notes, "This film is different in many ways, because some of my other films are more about addressing bigotry, or in *T Blockers*, it's a trans woman dealing with chasers and dating life and these negative things. Whereas in *Serpent's Skin*, Anna [Alexandra McVicker] is a trans woman who's comfortable with where she's at in life, despite having issues and hardships. It's about her life post-transitioning, where she's happy with who she is and how she interacts with the world."

As the film opens, Anna has relocated to the city of Adelaide, escaping the disapproval of her parents and others in her hometown. After moving in with her sister Dakota (Charlotte Chimes), she first hooks up with apartment neighbor Danny (Jordan Dulieu) before forging a stronger bond with Gen (Avalon Fast), whom she has previously seen in visions. Anna has also begun demonstrating nascent telekinetic abilities. Gen offers to teach her how to harness them — and those powers will come in handy when the couple are threatened by a supernatural evil.

McVicker, who is trans in real life, and Fast, also a young filmmaker with *Honeycomb* and the upcoming *Camp* under her belt, join Mackay for the Fantasia chat, and both were able to relate to their *Serpent's Skin* roles. "Anna says in the movie that sometimes she can feel what other people are feeling or thinking, and that influenced how I felt about her," McVicker explains. "That's true of me to some extent, but I was also making the choice that sometimes she gets it wrong. I do have this constant feeling of insecurity, and I wanted that to bleed into Anna."

"Our dynamic outside the film is obviously very different," Fast says, "but the deep love between the characters feels so real to me. And in knowing Alex outside the film, it was like, that instant you see somebody, you know them right away. I also feel like that's a queer relationship thing too, to feel there's been like a deep, longing connection from before you actually laid eyes on each other."

> **"I REALLY WANTED TO CREATE A HOMAGE TO *THE CRAFT* AND *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*, AND THE THINGS I GREW UP WATCHING. BUT ALSO TO TELL THE KIND OF TRANS STORY I WANT TO SEE."**
>
> **– ALICE MAIO MACKAY**

As she has in all her films, Mackay brought elements of her own experiences as a trans woman to *The Serpent's Skin*, as well as a love for genre works spotlighting supernaturally-empowered heroines. "This one has a different style from my other movies," she says. "It's more grounded, but still has elements of campiness and humor. I really wanted to create a homage to *The Craft* and *Buffy*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DARK START PICTURES

GEN (AVALON FAST) TAKES ANNA UNDER HER TELEKINETIC WING — AND WITH NEIGHBORS LIKE DANNY (FACING PAGE), THAT'S PROBABLY A GOOD THING.

the Vampire Slayer, and the things I grew up watching. But also to tell the kind of trans story I want to see, yet not make that the full point of the movie, and have it just be about relationships and how love can be magic."

When conceiving the character of Danny, who takes a turn to the dark side, Mackay took cues from another pop-culture source. "I wanted him to look like Kellin Quinn from [rock band] Sleeping With Sirens; that was a lot of the vibe. I really wanted an early-2000s emo boy, and Jordan completely physically transformed. We dyed his hair black and changed the way he shaped it, gave him all these tattoos and the costume and totally changed him from how he looks in everyday life. It's like polar opposites, which is very cool."

He certainly made an impression on his co-stars, and the subject brings out the BFF chemistry between the two leads. "I think it's safe to say we both had…" Fast begins, before breaking out laughing. "I don't want to out you like that," McVicker says, and Fast replies, "You can out me like that." "So, Avalon and I both had big crushes on Jordan," McVicker continues. "We were always giggling about him and talking to him and then reconvening and talking about our experience with him. I don't know if he could feel it or not." "I'm sure he did!" Fast says, laughing again.

The bond between the two leads is the true spine of *The Serpent's Skin*, and while there's plenty of horrific content, it was this side of the story Mackay enjoyed evoking the most. "Actually, the bloodiest stuff was the least exciting to do," she admits. "Not that it would take longer, because I've done elaborate effects before, but to me, *The Serpent's Skin* isn't about that. This is a romance interwoven with the supernatural, and the supernatural stuff is kind of secondary. So whenever that came about, I was like, 'That's cool,' but I'd much rather be shooting a scene with Alex and Charlotte in the kitchen talking. That to me was more fulfilling."

AMIN (TAHAR RAHIM) AND ALPHA (MÉLISSA BOROS) CONFRONT THE INEVITABLE.

THE SPREAD OF FEAR: INSIDE JULIA DUCOURNAU'S

ALPHA

The director of *Raw* and *Titane* returns with another body horror epic.

By Isaac Feldberg

Known for pushing the boundaries of body horror, the French filmmaker Julia Ducournau goes beyond corporeal provocation in *Alpha*, conceiving a new metamorphosis for a striking disease allegory that honors the deceased and the love that lingers after their bodies disintegrate away.

Titled for its young protagonist (Mélissa Boros), *Alpha* is set somewhere in coastal France and follows two timelines concurrently: one in the early 1990s, as 13-year-old Alpha rebels against her mother (Golshifteh Farahani) by getting tattooed with a shared needle at a house party, and one eight years earlier, as a mysterious blood-borne disease begins to spread.

In the hospital where Alpha's mother works as a doctor, the afflicted overwhelm available beds, their skin turning cold and pale before it slowly, painfully calcifies into marble; eventually, they crumble into dust. At school, as Alpha's wound shows signs of infection, her classmates bully her; terrified, her mother insists on blood testing, and Alpha starts to have panic attacks. At home, Alpha's uncle Amin (Tahar Rahim) moves in, battling heroin addiction. Desperate and physically frail, he sleeps on the floor of Alpha's room, experiencing night terrors that amplify Alpha's own.

Repressed trauma, long-buried memories, and an ambient state of fear all factor into the title character's coming of age. Shifting miasmically between time periods in accordance with her death-haunted emotional logic, rather than any fixed narrative trajectory, *Alpha* is perhaps Ducournau's boldest film to date — and certainly her most vulnerable.

"All my movies are set within the inner journey of my characters, and this one was always made to be labyrinthine," she tells FANGORIA. "It's a film about trauma, and the timeline of trauma is never linear. It's not a present that goes forward. It's always a present that is either eaten from within by the resurgences of the past or completely engulfed — overwhelmed — by the fear of the future, believing that what happened might happen again."

Alpha premiered at last year's Cannes Film Festival, where Ducournau's prior features were acclaimed. Screened in the 2016 edition's Critics' Week section, cannibalism coming-of-age saga *Raw* won the FIPRESCI Prize; five years later, flesh-and-metal psychodrama *Titane* won the Palme d'Or, Cannes' top award. *Alpha* was met divisively at Cannes, though subsequent reactions have been more positive; the initial backlash not only didn't concern

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEON

AMIN (TAHAR RAHIM) AND MAMAN (GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI) INVESTIGATE HIS STRANGE AFFLICTION.

"HERE, THE FEAR IS VERY RATIONAL. IT'S THE FEAR OF BEING SHUNNED BY SOCIETY, OF LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE, OF YOUR OWN MORTALITY. I WANTED TO MINIMIZE THE AUDIENCE'S SAFETY NET."

– JULIA DUCOURNAU –

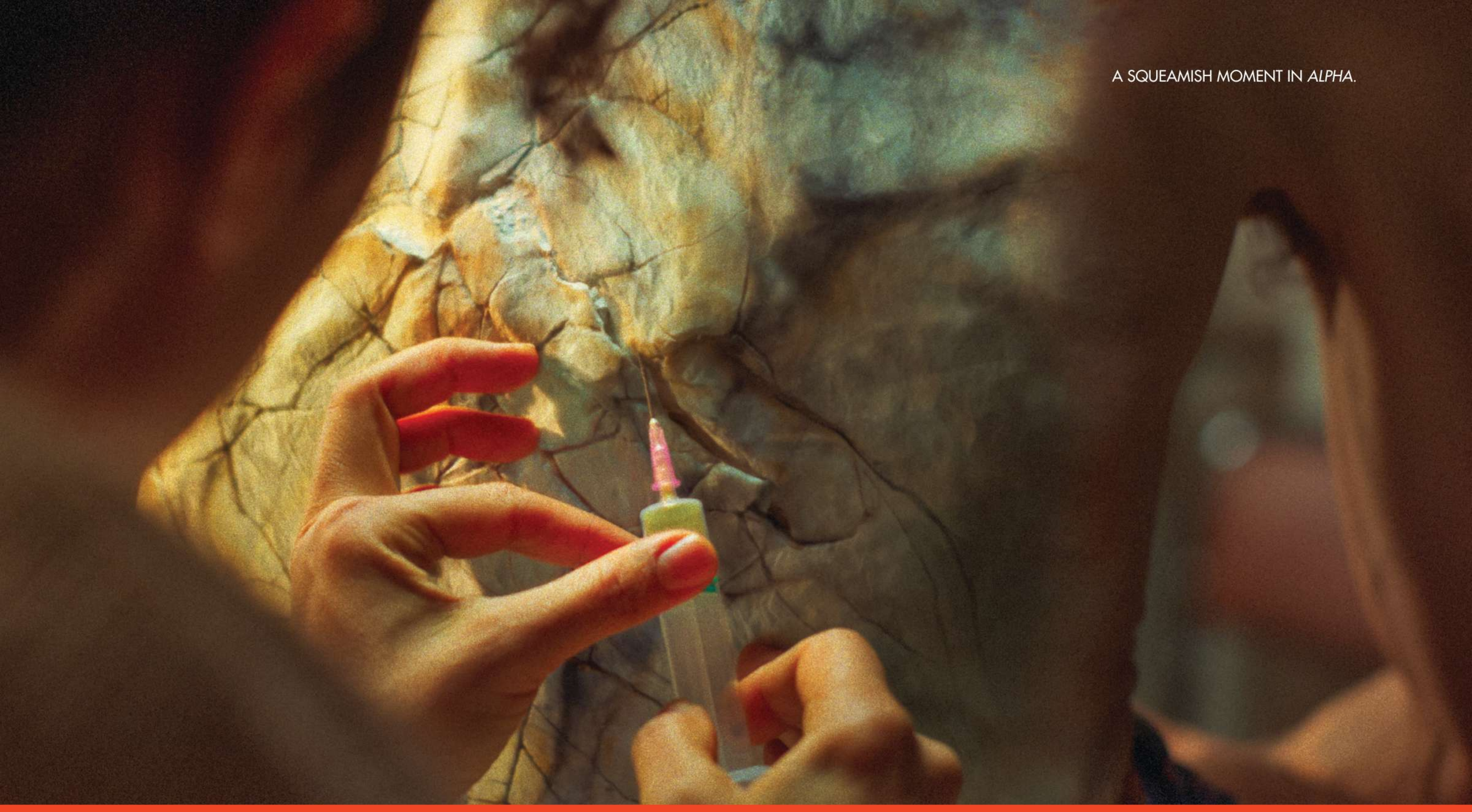
Ducournau but also validated her own convictions about the project, which required her to dispense with genre conventions.

"I've always considered genre as a form of catharsis in a safe place, because you know what's happening on screen is there to purge your most irrational fears, but that once you exit the theater, those fears won't come to pass," Ducournau explains. "Here, the fear is very rational. It's the fear of being shunned by society, of losing someone you love, of your own mortality. I wanted to minimize the audience's safety net."

Set though it is in the past, Ducournau was prompted to write *Alpha* by the world we're living in, specifically by the question of how one can be born into a world where everything seems to be dead or dying. "We are surrounded by death constantly, and the state of powerlessness we experience every day is choking us," she says. "It's very hard for me to put this into fiction, because we don't yet have historical distance. We're all crushed under this state of shock."

To purge these emotions, Ducournau reflected on her memories of living through the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, and its aftermath in the '90s. "This was the

ALPHA IS A STORY OF MORTALITY AND LOSS, WITH YOUNG MÉLISSA BOROS AT ITS CENTER



A SQUEAMISH MOMENT IN *ALPHA*.

first time I had the feeling that we were at the end of our world," she admits.

Rather than invoking AIDS directly, she focused on depicting the atmosphere of that time, as she'd experienced it. "Society was eaten alive by fear," Ducournau recalls. "We ostracized an entire fringe of the population on dishonest pretenses; we reached a brutally inhumane point where society believed the people afflicted by this disease somehow deserved it… The real disease in my film is fear itself."

Ducournau's concept of an illness that mutates flesh into marble was inspired by a desire to consecrate those who'd been condemned by society. This led her to *gisant*, or recumbent effigies: sculptures of deceased persons in eternal repose.

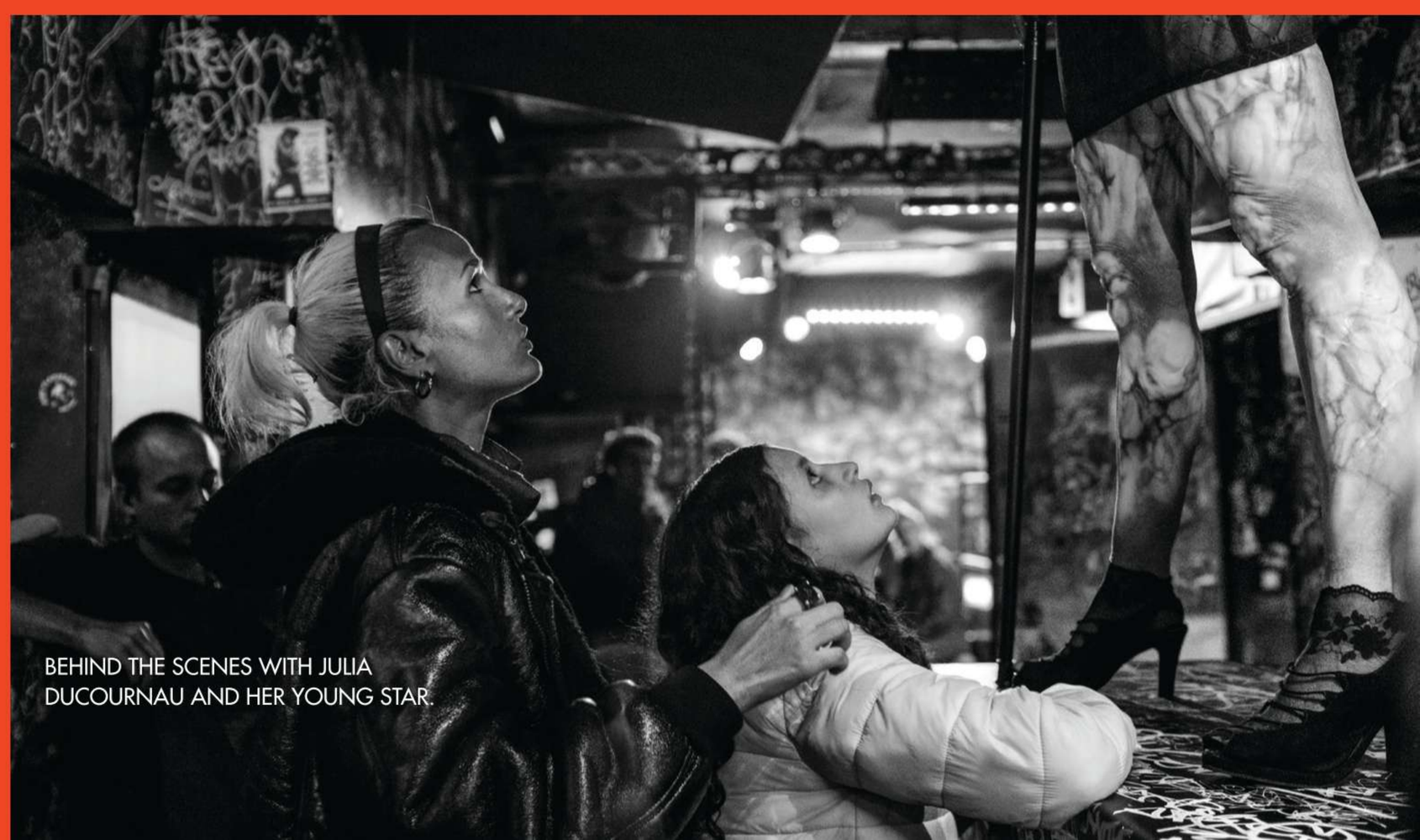
"I needed to acknowledge how these patients were ostracized by society, to impart sacredness to these people who'd been treated like pariahs," she says. "I wanted to depict them as saints, as martyrs, to sanctify their lives and deaths. The choice of marble was instant. It created a monument to their memory and put them back into a verticality they'd been long denied." To give references to her makeup and visual effects departments, Ducournau visited churches and cathedrals across Europe, photographing religious sculptures she found. "From there, we had to decide what color of marble, what color of veins in marble, what level of crevices," she says.

To depict the disease's progression, actors were covered in head-to-toe silicone prosthetics before visual-effects work was employed to give their skin a hard, rigid appearance and add a surface sheen that would reflect light like polished marble.

Amin eventually shows symptoms of the disease and is hospitalized; to play him, Rahim lost over 40 pounds. Caring for the physically depleted actor on set was as crucial while applying prosthetics as any artistic aspect; crew pre-painted prosthetics and made Rahim comfortable enough he could sleep during the three-hour application process.

"THE TRUTH WE CAN'T TELL EACH OTHER IS THAT GRIEF IS A MUTATION. WHEN YOU LOSE SOMEONE, YOU WILL BEAR THIS WOUND FOREVER. YOU WILL BE MOURNING UNTIL THE END OF YOUR DAYS. IT CHANGES YOUR STATE OF BEING IN THE WORLD."

- JULIA DUCOURNAU -



BEHIND THE SCENES WITH JULIA DUCOURNAU AND HER YOUNG STAR.

In one pivotal sequence, as Alpha's mother examines Amin and tries to perform a biopsy, she accidentally scrapes the marbling surface of his back too hard; as it caves in, red dust pours uncontrollably from the open wound. This is among the most shocking scenes in *Alpha*, not least for the agony Amin endures.

"The marbling of flesh is extraordinarily painful," explains special makeup effects artist Olivier Afonso, who's worked with Ducournau on all three of her features, as well as short film *Junior*. "Everyone's touched marble and felt how cold, smooth, and hard it is. Everyone can understand that, if someone's flesh was to become marble, the pain would be great. For Tahar as well, it was very uncomfortable. He was suffering."

Ducournau agrees: "This was Sisyphean work." But the final effect was visceral, so much so that Ducournau recalls her sound designer jumping out of his seat while working on the scene where Amin's back collapses, and declaring, "It's like looking into the mouth of hell!"

CGI was used to achieve the visual of petrified red blood trickling down Amin's back. Initially, Ducournau thought this blood might appear milky-white, mirroring a puff of chalky dust the afflicted exude as their last breath. But she felt this risked sacrificing his humanity. "He's still alive, and it was important to me that Amin remained human up until the end," she says.

PHOTO BY OLIVIER AFONSO

THE FX TEAM READIES RAHIM'S PROSTHETICS.

From that decision on, Ducournau knew *Alpha* would conclude with her lead enveloped in a cloud of red dust. "There was a lineage of logic in my head," she says. "This wind is made up of the bodies of all those we've lost to the disease. There's a catharsis in this; the wind washes the trauma away, but the dust remains on Alpha's skin."

The dust was created practically from a mix of red earth and crushed bricks, then graded more aggressively in post-production; set designers "covered an entire council estate" in the dust for her final scene, Ducournau recalls. The resultant visual was enthralling — and thematically vivid.

"When you lose someone, people tell you mourning will be step-by-step: that after six months pass, it'll be better — then a year, then two — and you'll learn to manage your grief," Ducournau reflects. "It's our survival mode, and it's important to tell each other these fictions. But the truth we can't tell each other is that grief is a mutation. When you lose someone, you will bear this wound forever. You will be mourning until the end of your days. It changes your state of being in the world."

This idea, of course, is a throughline for Ducournau. "To me, mutation is life, and death is its absence," she affirms. In that sense, her three features "could be seen as a triptych," she notes. "In my first feature, *Raw*, humanity is seen as a holy grail to reach for: to transcend your animal condition, to create moral values, not to yield to your primal instincts. In *Titane*, what I present is humanity on the verge of collapse — but with a solution, an exit, through transhumanism, through mutation that's not only essential but almost idealistic."

Unlike in *Titane*, which concludes as a baby is born with a titanium spine, mutation offers the characters of *Alpha* no clear path forward, nor hope of salvation. "In *Alpha*, I present humanity as it actually is, for better and worse," she says. "There is no exit from our condition at all, only acceptance of it that allows us to stay standing in the tempest. The only decision is whether you cling more to fear — or to love." 💀

NATALIE GRACE IS A NEW KIND OF MUMMY IN LEE CRONIN'S LATEST.

UNWRAPPING LEE CRONIN'S THE MUMMY

THE FILMMAKER TRIES TO KEEP MUM ABOUT HIS NEW MOVIE, BUT FANGORIA MANAGES TO DIG UP SOME DETAILS.

BY KIMBERLY LESZAK

The following article contains not a single solitary spoiler for Lee Cronin's The Mummy.

The weight and properties of the earth can make the old new again, or recycle the dead; it can change seeds into plants, coal into diamonds, and corpses – well, it usually converts organic matter into more nutrient-dense soil, and that's the end of it. But as fictional Mainer Jud Crandall once declared, "the soil of a man's heart is stonier," which is to say, it's all a little more complicated than that. The mind wanders and the imagination finds unspeakable things in that cold, suffocating dark.

SARCOPHAGUS? CHECK. BANDAGES? CHECK. IT'S A MUMMY MOVIE, ALL RIGHT. (BELOW) LOOKS LIKE LEE CRONIN IS STILL MESSING WITH CURSED TEXTS.

And it's that very soil where Lee Cronin's creativity thrives.

In each of his films, the Irish filmmaker explores the primal fear of realizing the energy/soul/personality behind a familiar face has undergone the old *presto chango*, sometimes at the mercy of the soil, but always by the hands of death. "The tagline on the poster for *The Hole in the Ground* was 'Fear the Familiar.' And I remember when A24's marketing department sent the first poster over, it said, 'Fear the Unfamiliar.' And I said, 'But everybody fears the unfamiliar.' It's fearing the familiar that's actually truly frightening. Fearing something that should be cohesive and warm, and there should be love there. That's the terrifying thing. In *The Hole in the Ground*, it's a mum misidentifying her son; in *Evil Dead Rise*, it's more corrupt and more violent and quicker, but it's also, 'Holy shit — that's mum, but that's not mum.'"

Lee Cronin's The Mummy, his latest exploration of this existential theme, starring Jack Reynor, Natalie Grace, and Laia Costa, hits theaters April 17.

Of his *Mummy*, Cronin is reluctant to share too many details, but tells FANGORIA, "It's a missing kid story. It's also a story about their return — really, what anybody would want if someone went missing: for that person to return into their lives, and at whatever age they were. There would always be challenges and trauma in the reintegration, and then exploring what happens if that person brings the supernatural back home as well."

Set among the arid climates of New Mexico and Egypt (though astute film buffs may clock that filming took place amidst the scenery of Spain's Almeria region, where Sergio Leone shot many iconic spaghetti westerns), Cronin describes this tale as *Poltergeist* meets *Se7en*: there's family encountering the supernatural, and there's unsettling, violent crime, combining to create a ripe take on mummy mythos. But beyond the sandy setting and the

"THIS IS A MOVIE THAT IS ABOUT PEELING BACK LAYERS, ABOUT DISCOVERY. AND THAT'S REFLECTED SOMEWHAT IN THE MONSTER DESIGN."

- LEE CRONIN-

monstrous title, Cronin says the similarities to past cinematic mummies end there. “I had to find a story that I wanted to tell. And I knew that I wanted to play more genre chords than maybe just gore. I really wanted to make something that had quite a strong mystery backbone.”

Avoiding specifics, Cronin says he’s eager to explore the darkest corners of universal fear, indulging audiences who want a glimpse of the literal worst that could happen. “Everybody can reflect, myself included, on arguments, relationship troubles, and all of these things that can happen in your life, often linked to losing sight of who somebody is or realizing someone isn't who they say they are. It all links into that little primal area. I trust my close circle of family and friends, so there's no one I think I question, but *you never know*. You never know if someone is hiding behind a mask. That is a scary thought, because at the end of the day, if you push to the extremes of it, what you're really saying is we're all alone.”

That’s the thematic side of Cronin’s terrifying work, but rest assured, he says: “It’s a monster movie. The look of

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC. • PREVIOUS PAGE BY PATRICK REDMOND

CHARLIE (JACK REYNOR) AND LARISSA (LAIA COSTA) FIND OUT THE HARD WAY THAT MICE IN THE ATTIC >>>>> MUMMIES IN THE ATTIC.

THE MUMMY’S HAND. (JUST DESCRIBING THE IMAGE, NOT THE 1940 FILM.)

our monster evolves throughout the film, and crescendos in a certain way. And as is always the case with these things, I wanted to be as super practical as I could. If I had no money and I was making something out of flour and water and strawberry jelly, I'd still want to do it for real. But luckily, I've got incredibly talented people around me that allow us to create a super convincing monstrous entity in the movie."

Enlisting Academy Award-nominated prosthetics designer Arjen Tuiten, responsible for Sean Penn's final form in *One Battle After Another*, was the first step to molding Cronin's mummy. "I would share little paintings and photographs and details and oddities with Arjen." Cronin alludes to a throughline in his monsters that continues here. "This is a movie that is about peeling back layers, about discovery. And that's reflected somewhat in the monster design. If something's obvious to begin with, there's no journey to go on. The evolution of a creature in a movie – I enjoy that most. It's in my last movie [*Evil Dead Rise*]. It's not like Ellie comes in full Deadite; there is that

CRONIN ASSURES NATALIE GRACE THAT ALL THAT SLIME *WILL* WASH OFF.

MAUD (BILLIE ROY) WAS ALWAYS A HANDFUL ON SCHOOL PICTURE DAY.

WE ASKED FOR A PICTURE OF LEE CRONIN GIVING *DIRECTION*, NOT GIVING *DIRECTIONS*.

sense of journey and transformation. I always liked that approach, and what's interesting is how you give yourself room for a monstrous voyage across the film."

When pressed, Cronin does name one pre-existing mummy on his metaphorical mood board: "The one in *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?*," he replies without hesitation. "When I close my eyes and think of a mummy, I think of that weird green bandaged color. And actually I put that color palette into a lot of our mummy's clothing in the film as well – that green-y aspect is there."

There's also plenty of red; the filmmaker who notoriously used around 1700 gallons of blood in *Evil Dead Rise* hasn't kicked that habit yet. "There's still plenty of blood," he assures us. "And gore. And bodily function. And everything that I think you want from a real experiential horror movie. It's probably all spilt with a little more, I don't know – it's not decorum, trust me. And in some respects, where there's less liquid, there are more tactile elements in terms of skin and pieces, small components of the body."

Beneath all the rotten green and sticky-gooey red splashed across Cronin's films are empathic, believable characters. Jack Reynor, best known to Fango fans as the bad boyfriend burned alive inside a bear in Ari Aster's *Midsommar*, is set to make his way over the redemption arc as Charlie, a distraught and determined dad navigating his young daughter Katie's disappearance – and her equally puzzling return. "I just knew he was absolutely right for the role. He's obviously got some notoriety within the horror world, and in this movie he'll elicit a lot more sympathy."

Cronin's character work is inspired by some surprising sources. In the span of our interview, he references *Scent of a Woman*, John Hughes, various rom-coms (*High Fidelity* fans, he's one of us), and Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. Turns out there's a lot of tender wholesomeness wedged between weaponized cheese graters and feral changelings. The success of all Cronin's films, however, hinge on the believability of young, often adolescent characters, and we apparently have one film to thank for it.

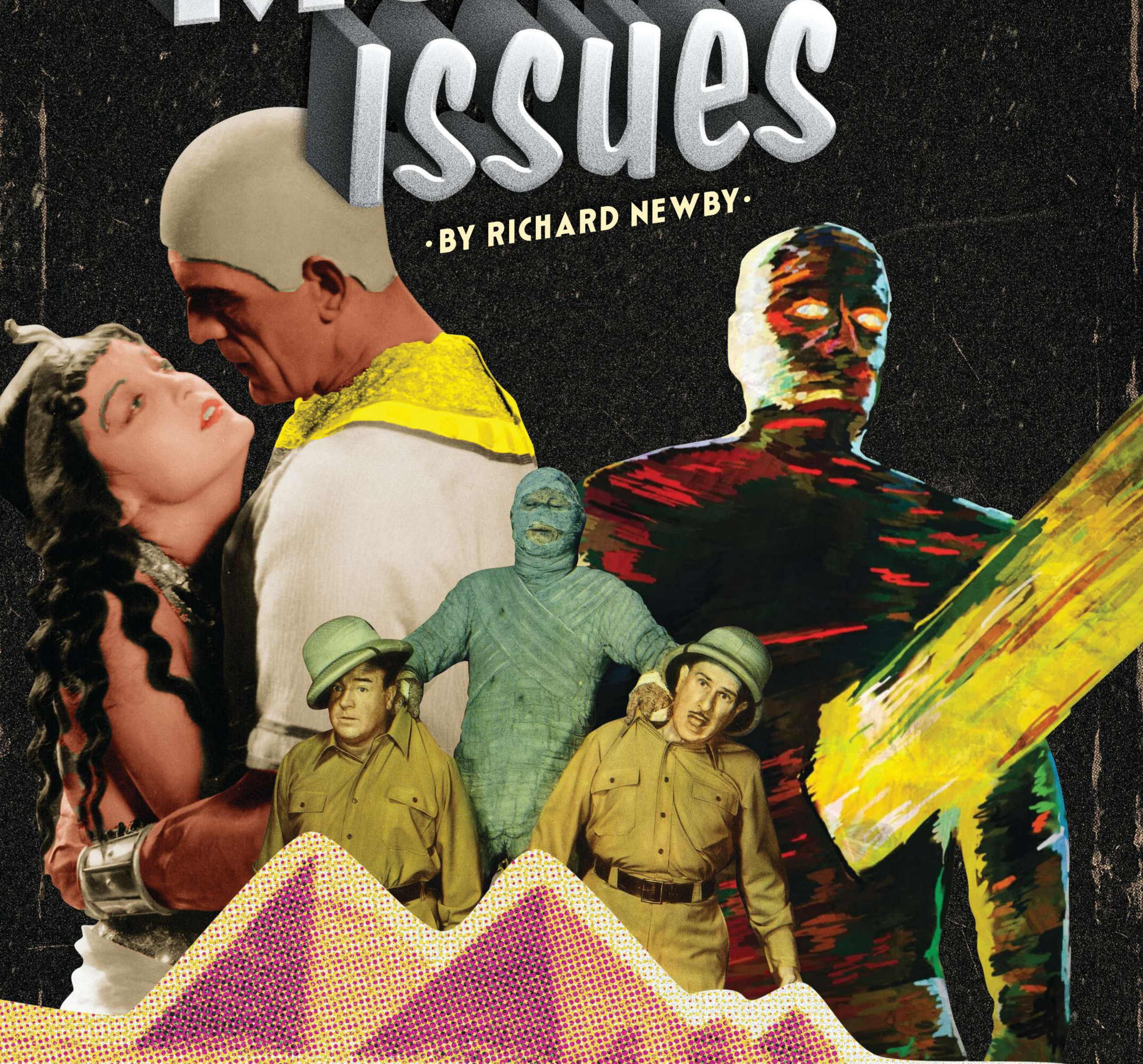
"I always felt so much of the '80s and '90s movie kids, especially American kids, would often be presented as one-note: smartasses or smart alecks," Cronin laments before his lips ascend to a smile. "And then I saw *School of Rock* and I was like, 'There you go. I like all of these kids.' And ever since then, *School of Rock* would probably be one of my biggest references when it comes to actually creating rounded, thoughtful, interesting and real younger characters." Natalie Grace's Katie and her particular journey in *The Mummy* will continue this surprising thread that's carried through Cronin's previous work.

As we ended our conversation, Cronin rattled off more than a few stories he could tell next, including a gnarly serial killer plot, a survivalist rom-com he wrote fresh out of film school (probably not going to happen in this lifetime, he admits) and, if we're lucky, a future visit to Elm Street. But for now, he's still in *Mummy* mode, with his self-proclaimed love of challenges and mysteries tested to the limit with his latest creation. "Between multiple countries, multiple languages, a really large cast, and taking a presumed lore in a *very* different direction, this movie itself was quite a monster to create." 💀

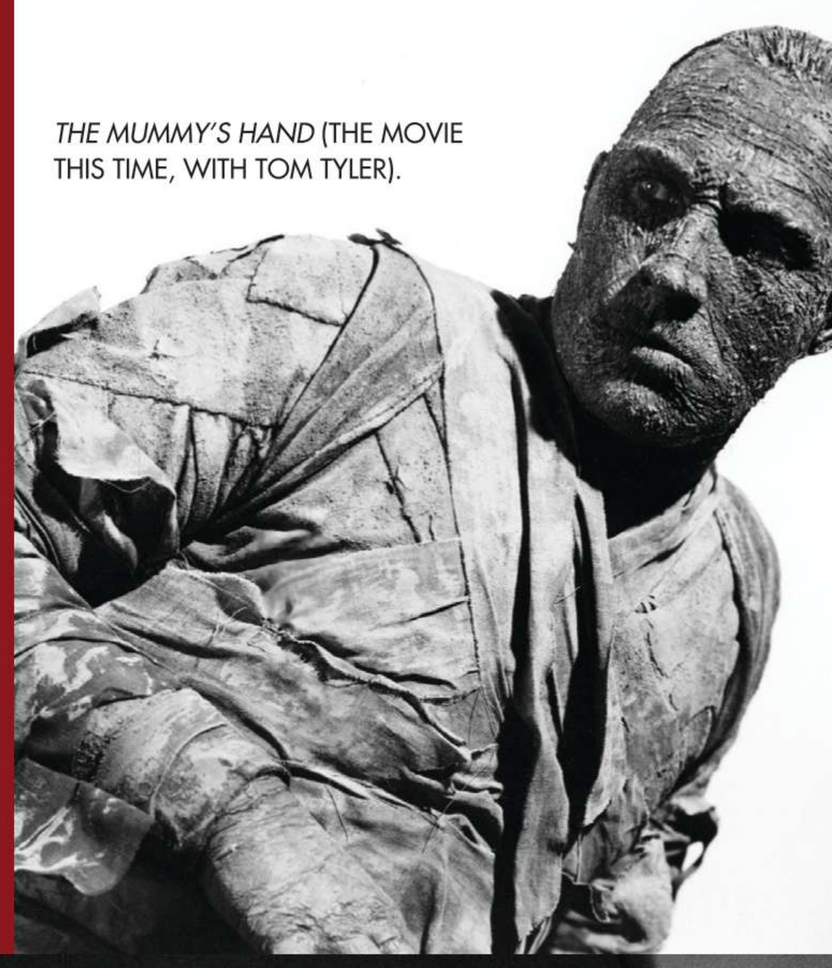
PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC. • (FACING TOP) BY PATRICK REDMOND, (TOP) BY QUIM VIVES

MUMMY Issues

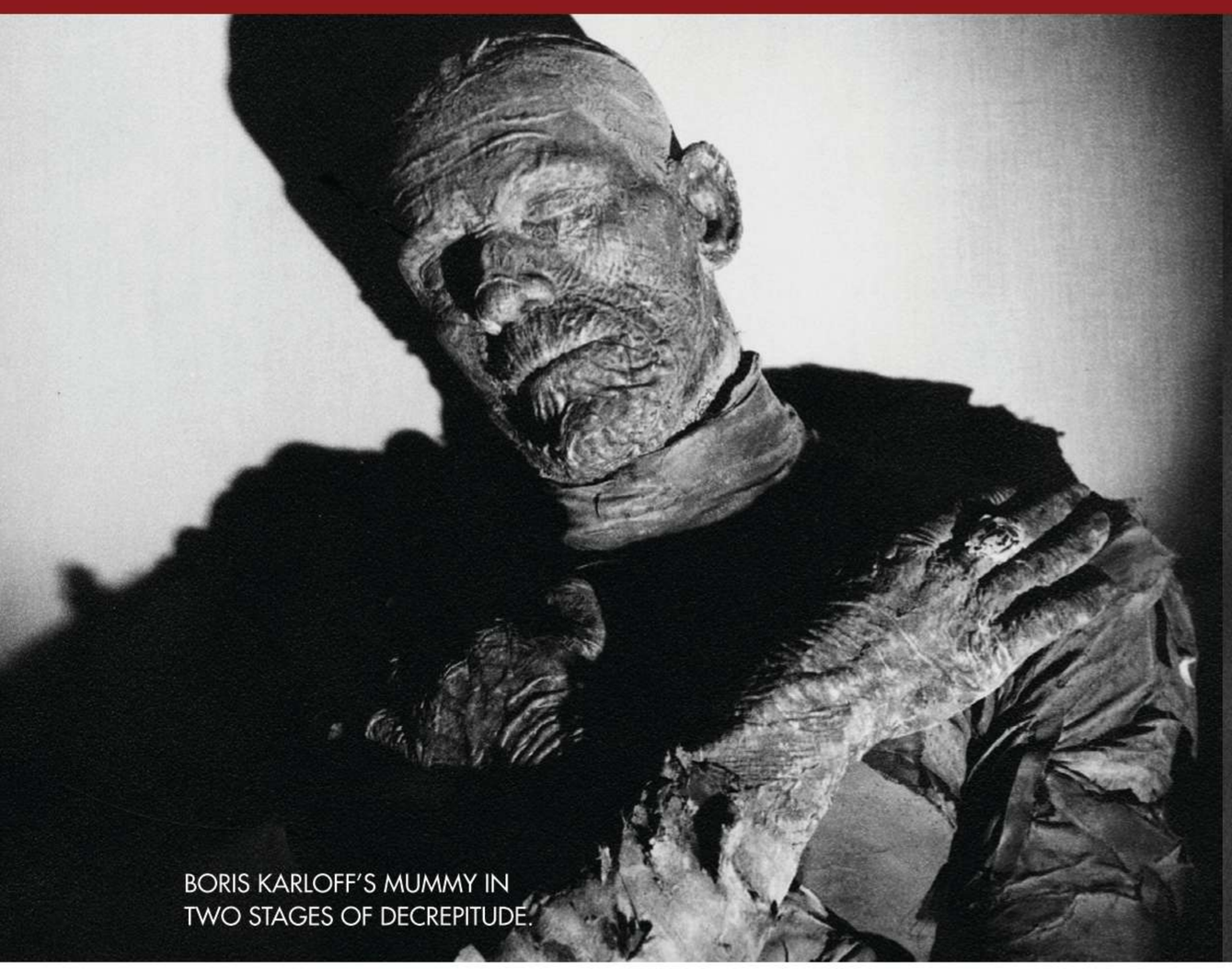
·BY RICHARD NEWBY·



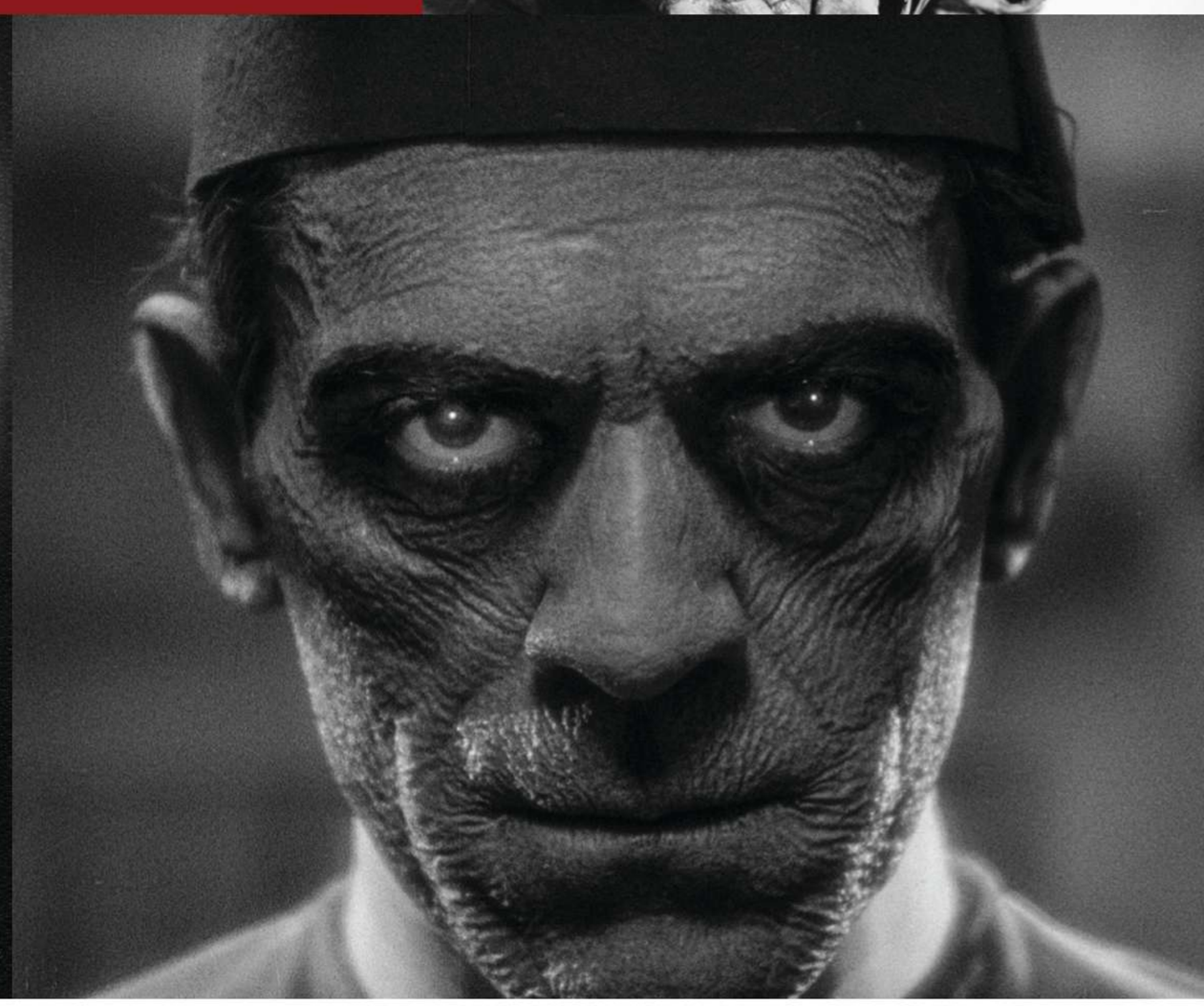
In the bright eye of the unblinking sun, held in the palms of the gods, the shifting sands of time offer revelation and temptation to adventurers willing to take the risk. But within both offerings there lies a curse! There are few deft enough to navigate it, and many succumb to the dark heart of banality on their expeditions. I am talking about mummy horror media which, from the early 20th century through today, has had a fascinating history of death and resurrection. While the cloth-wrapped visage of the mummy, most often associated with ancient Egypt, remains less popular than other horror archetypes, it is rarely absent from the mainstream for long. As we anticipate *Lee Cronin's The Mummy*, it's time to explore the appeal of this monster that has always had one foot in the supernatural and another in history.



THE MUMMY'S HAND (THE MOVIE THIS TIME, WITH TOM TYLER).



BORIS KARLOFF'S MUMMY IN TWO STAGES OF DECREPITUDE.



As an onscreen horror figure, the mummy has tangled with the likes Abbott and Costello, Bugs Bunny, Mystery Incorporated, Superman, Spider-Man, Buffy, the Scoobies, and Tom Cruise. In print, the mummy has been cast in ink within the pages of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249," Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Stephen King's *IT*, Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned*, R.L. Stine's *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*, and Marvel Comics' N'Kantu, the Living Mummy, created by Steve Gerber and Rich Buckler. But even with those varied appearances, the mummy stands apart from other famous monsters. There is a tangibility, born from archaeological discoveries and studies that often ground the mummy within what was, at one point, the contemporary zeitgeist. Unlike vampires or werewolves, mummies ironically retain a sense of modernity. This case is not unlike Frankenstein's monster, as the lore surrounding its fictional depictions are partially based in science, but also inseparable from discussions concerning faith, gods, and humankind's desire for immortality. And even more so than the various depictions of Frankenstein's monster, mummies, while interesting and sometimes eerie, are rarely, if ever, frightening (unless you're Kevin Malone from *The Office*). That's a tough spot for any monster, and mummies have it tougher than Frankenstein's monster because there's no singular work of brilliance, like Mary Shelley's novel, from which to draw. The mummy as a monster is cobbled together from rumors, whispers, motes of dust, and the sheer creative will to tell a great story, which are, unfortunately, few and far between.

The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 was a global news story that resurrected interest in ancient Egypt. It was this event, along with the subsequent deaths of several excavators blamed on a "Pharaoh's Curse" that inspired Universal Studios' *The Mummy* (1932). Directed by Karl Freund and starring Boris Karloff as Imhotep/The Mummy and Zita Johann as Imhotep's reincarnated lover, Helen Grosvenor/Princess

Anck-es-en-Amun, the film is one of those rare great mummy films. While it could've benefited from a little more of Karloff in those bandages from the opening, the film has a thematic weight and an urgency to it that every subsequent *Mummy* sequel of that era was lacking. It's a story of love turned into obsession, but even more relevant, *The Mummy* is a film about theft. Stolen time, stolen life, stolen love, and stolen artifacts, and while those themes wouldn't be further explored in Universal's sequels, they would pay off later.

Universal's first sequel to *The Mummy*, *The Mummy's Hand* (1940) is a fun, buddy adventure romp and, along with the original film, is the most obvious precursor to Stephen Sommers' *The Mummy* (1999). Subsequent sequels *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944), and *The Mummy's Curse* (1944), however, are an absolute slog of diminishing returns. None of these films brings back Imhotep or Karloff, instead focusing on a mummy named Kharis, portrayed by Lon Chaney Jr. Kharis' backstory is lifted wholesale from Imhotep's, and footage from *The Mummy* is reused repeatedly. Not even a comedic take almost a decade later, *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy* (1955), could get the mummy walking again.

Rather than having agency like Imhotep, Kharis is guarded by an Egyptian high priest who feeds him three tana leaves to keep his heart beating, and nine to make him walk. In each film Kharis seeks out the reincarnation of his lover Ananka, only for the high priest to also catch feelings and abandon his mission so that he can enslave a white woman as his lover. While these movies are all products of their time, these sequels display a significant case of orientalism that is distinctly off-putting. Where the original film depicted Helen as half-Egyptian and gave her a direct link to the past as well as the means to save herself, something that Faith Erin Hicks brings into greater focus in her official graphic novel reinterpretation *Universal Monsters: The Mummy*, the post *Hand* sequels moved the action to America and looked at Egypt through the lens of sinister mysticism with brown men chasing after chaste all-

KHARIS (LON CHANEY JR.) MENACES IN *THE MUMMY'S GHOST*.

American girls, meant to be saved by all-American boys. The release of these films during WWII meant that they carried with them an inescapable sense of jingoism.

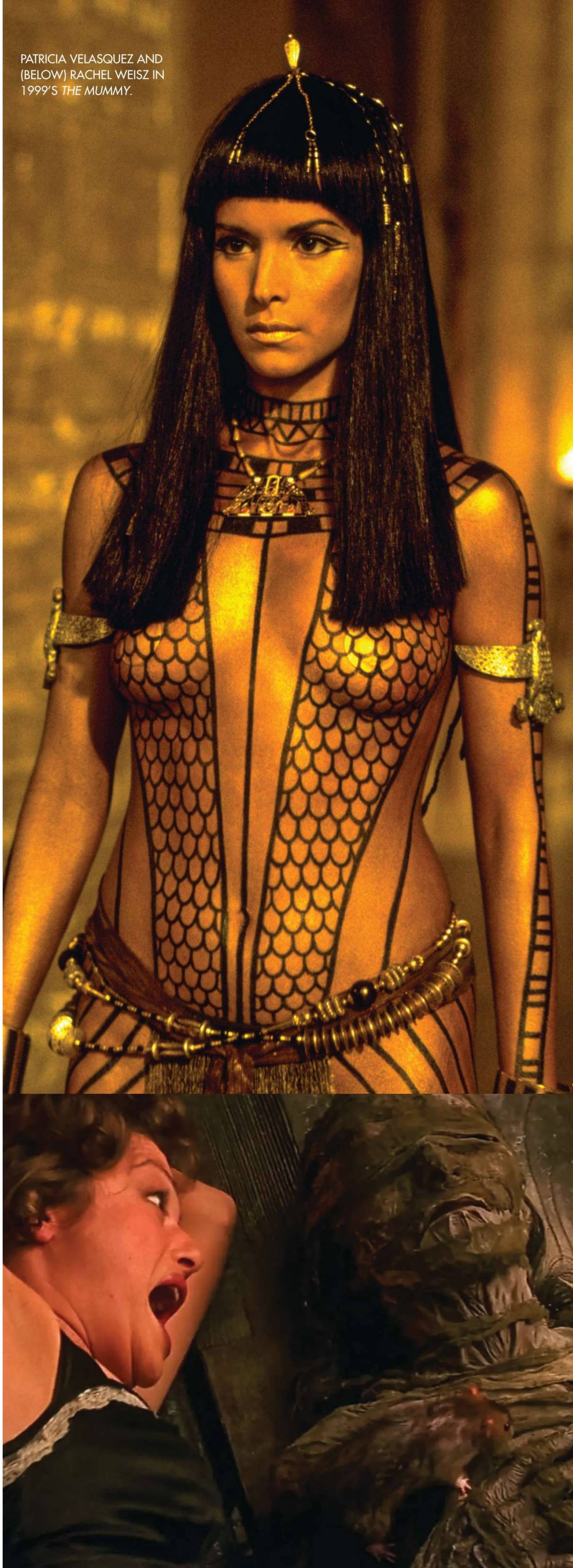
When Hammer began its own mummy series, it did so by remaking Universal's *Hand* and *Tomb* with *The Mummy* (1959), directed by Terence Fisher and starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing as Kharis and archaeologist John Banning, respectively. The film has nice production values, standard for Hammer horror, but it doesn't offer any new ideas. That wouldn't happen until the final film in Hammer's mummy franchise, the stand-alone entry, *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (1971), the first film adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1903 novel *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, which never achieved the same popularity as *Dracula* and went largely unnoticed until the 1960s. Yet, like *Dracula*, *Seven Stars* was concerned with rapid changes happening within British society at the turn of the century. Like the novel, the film focuses on Margaret (Valerie Leon), the daughter of an Egyptologist who

HAMMER TIME: CHRISTOPHER LEE'S MUMMY MASHES MISTER CUSHING.

bears an uncanny resemblance to Queen Tera, who has been in suspended animation within her tomb, kept inside Margaret's father's house, for thousands of years. Possessed by Tera, Margaret begins hunting down members of her father's expedition, reclaiming the artifacts stolen from Tera's tomb and leaving each thief with their throat ripped out. The film lands on something that previous mummy films barely touched on: the theft of history and culture and how such a theft could change staunchly-held beliefs about life, death, and ownership. These ideas were coupled with those from Stoker's novel, in which he presented the more theologically and technologically advanced culture of Ancient Egypt as a necessary and admirable threat to British Imperialism. In part, *Seven Stars* was Stoker's means of advocating for the past as a means to shape the infinite possibilities of the future.

In Mike Newell's *The Awakening* (1980), the second adaptation of Stoker's novel, more significant changes were made to the source material and the film leans into *The Omen* as a significant influence. Still, it's an interesting slow-burn film about the evils of colonialism and theft of Egypt's heritage and history. Yes, *The Awakening* also frequently features a shirtless, fifty-seven-year-old Charlton Heston, whose single-minded obsession with a mummy that looks like his daughter leads to some incestuous overtones. His unhinged performance, including the punching of a non-reanimated mummy in the face repeatedly while spittle flies from his mouth, borders on the farcical, but the film's commitment to reckoning with museum culture and the dehumanization of bodies and desecration of graves is good stuff.

During the '80s and '90s, mummies made appearances in *Monster Squad* (1987), *Waxwork* (1988), *Tales from the Darkside: The Movie* (1990), and *Under Wraps* (1997), along with other big and small screen releases, but it wouldn't be until 1999 that mummies got a big dose of rejuvenating elixir. After several decades of Universal trying to reboot their dormant *Mummy* property, working with horror masters like George A. Romero, Clive Barker, Mick Garris, and Joe Dante, they finally struck gold with Stephen Sommers who envisioned the reboot as an Indiana Jones-style swashbuckling adventure that would bring Imhotep (Arnold Vosloo) back to the screen for the first time since 1932. *The Mummy* (1999), and its sequel *The Mummy Returns* (2001), made the Mummy iconic and exciting again, and, at least for those who were kids at the time of release, frightening for the first time. Not only was the Mummy interesting and given agency again, bolstered by his use of Biblical plagues, but the central characters Rick O'Connell (Brendan Fraser), Evelyn (Rachel Weisz), and Jonathan Carnahan (John Hannah) subverted the tropes of pilfering outsiders and the damsel in distress, emerging as compelling characters whose curiosity is a far cry from the orientalism of their predecessors. And like



PATRICIA VELASQUEZ AND (BELOW) RACHEL WEISZ IN 1999'S *THE MUMMY*.

the original movie, the themes of stolen love and life are very much present in Sommers' films.

Unfortunately, a third film, *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008), made without the involvement of Sommers and Weisz, feels like an emotionally empty VFX reel and it failed to garner the enthusiasm of critics or audiences. There's a run of cheaply-produced DTV mummy movies that can be dug up on Tubi, and the mummy-ish found footage movie, *The Pyramid* (2014) is a good time, but mummies have largely remained dormant in the 21st century.

The Mummy (2017) directed by Alex Kurtzman, made a great choice in casting Sofia Boutella, the only actor of North African ethnicity to portray the titular Mummy, but Ahmanet's story is sidelined for a Tom Cruise action vehicle. The film never gels as it tries to be a horror movie, a cinematic universe launchpad, and an action movie all at once. The result is competing motivations that don't feel like a *Mummy* movie, and it dives headfirst into the imperialism Stoker was concerned with by keeping Ahmanet a captive of a private British military organization, led by Doctor Jekyll (Russell Crowe), and, even more confoundingly, turning Cruise's character into the Egyptian god Set by the film's end. It's a mess.

There is one last, significant gem of a mummy movie that has achieved cult status among horror fans, but never broke out with mainstream audiences. That movie is Don Coscarelli's *Bubba Ho-Tep* (2002), based on the novella of the same name by Joe R. Landsdale. Two residents of a retirement home, one claiming to be Elvis Presley (Bruce Campbell), who switched places with an impersonator, and another claiming to be John "Jack" F. Kennedy (Ossie Davis), who was part of a PSYOP that dyed his skin, face off against a mummy who is draining the last remaining life out of their retirement home's residents. There are several nods to the Universal Pictures films, but Coscarelli's film is entirely unconcerned with Egyptology and ancient artifacts to its benefit. But it is concerned with aging. In this case, the mummy, stolen from a museum, is a depiction of the pain and fear of aging — of trying to hold onto life at the expense of others. While Elvis and Jack both gripe about their bodies falling apart, about their past and pains, loves lost and opportunities missed, they ultimately stand in opposition to the mummy on both a physical and emotional plane. The identities of these two men, real or imagined, don't matter. Instead, the film is just as much about icons faced with mortality as it is anyone faced with mortality. The film surmises that the greatest curse is clinging to life long after its time has passed, and maintaining only a semblance of living, bereft of love.

Perhaps that's true of the mummy as an onscreen horror figure as well. Maybe it is just clinging to life. But the mummy has died and come back before and there's certainly reason to hope Lee Cronin's film will be a cinematic resurrection of the figure. Regardless, revelation and temptation are always calling to filmmakers and, shifting sands, danger, and curses notwithstanding, death is only the beginning.

SOFIA BOUTELLA'S MUMMY WAS OVERSHADOWED BY THE TOM CRUISE OF IT ALL IN 2017.

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A HANDS-ON...AND OFF...HORROR EXPERIENCE: AN INTERVIEW WITH

THE RESTORATION AT GRAYSON MANOR'S GLENN McQUAID

BY MICHAEL VARRATI

BOYD GRAYSON (CHRIS COLFER) HAS SURVIVED THE LOSS OF BOTH HANDS — BUT HIS MOTHER'S CARE MIGHT JUST DO HIM IN.

There's something about a sentient severed extremity that tends to leave horror audiences tickled... and not just because of phantom limb syndrome.

The uncanny creeps inspired by the notion of a body part having a life of its own, independent of the whole, is a concept that has been explored in various ways across genre cinema, but with the arrival of *The Restoration at Grayson Manor*, the subgenre has never been bitchier... and that's the utmost of compliments.

Exploring the acidic relationship between a gay musician who has recently lost his hands and his genealogy-obsessed mother, *The Restoration at Grayson Manor* is a cutting exploration of family dynamics and what it means to pick up the pieces — occasionally quite literally — amidst dysfunction. Set within the sumptuous estate house of the title, the film balances a sense of haunting antiquity with the horrors of modernity when the mother hires a doctor to rebuild her son's missing appendages via questionable science.

With this twisted tale now breaking free of the manor and making its way out into the world, filmmaker Glenn McQuaid, known to genre fans for 2008's *I Sell the Dead* and the original *V/H/S*, sat down to discuss *The Restoration at Grayson Manor*'s auditory origins, queer resonance, and the powerhouse performers at the film's center, among much, much more.

WE DIDN'T MISPLACE A MUMMY PIC; THAT'S DR. TANNOCK (DANIEL ADEGBOYEGA) TALKING TO A NEWLY HANDS-LESS BOYD.

Let's talk about the genesis of *The Restoration at Grayson Manor*. I know that you co-wrote the script with author Clay McLeod Chapman. How did that collaboration come about... and why this story?

We met through Larry Fessenden and our audio drama show *Tales from Beyond the Pale*. I initially approached Clay about writing *The Restoration at Grayson Manor* with me as a half-hour audio drama. But, as we got together and shot the shit about the story, we thought, well, if you're going to make a piece about killer hands, you kind of want to *see* them.

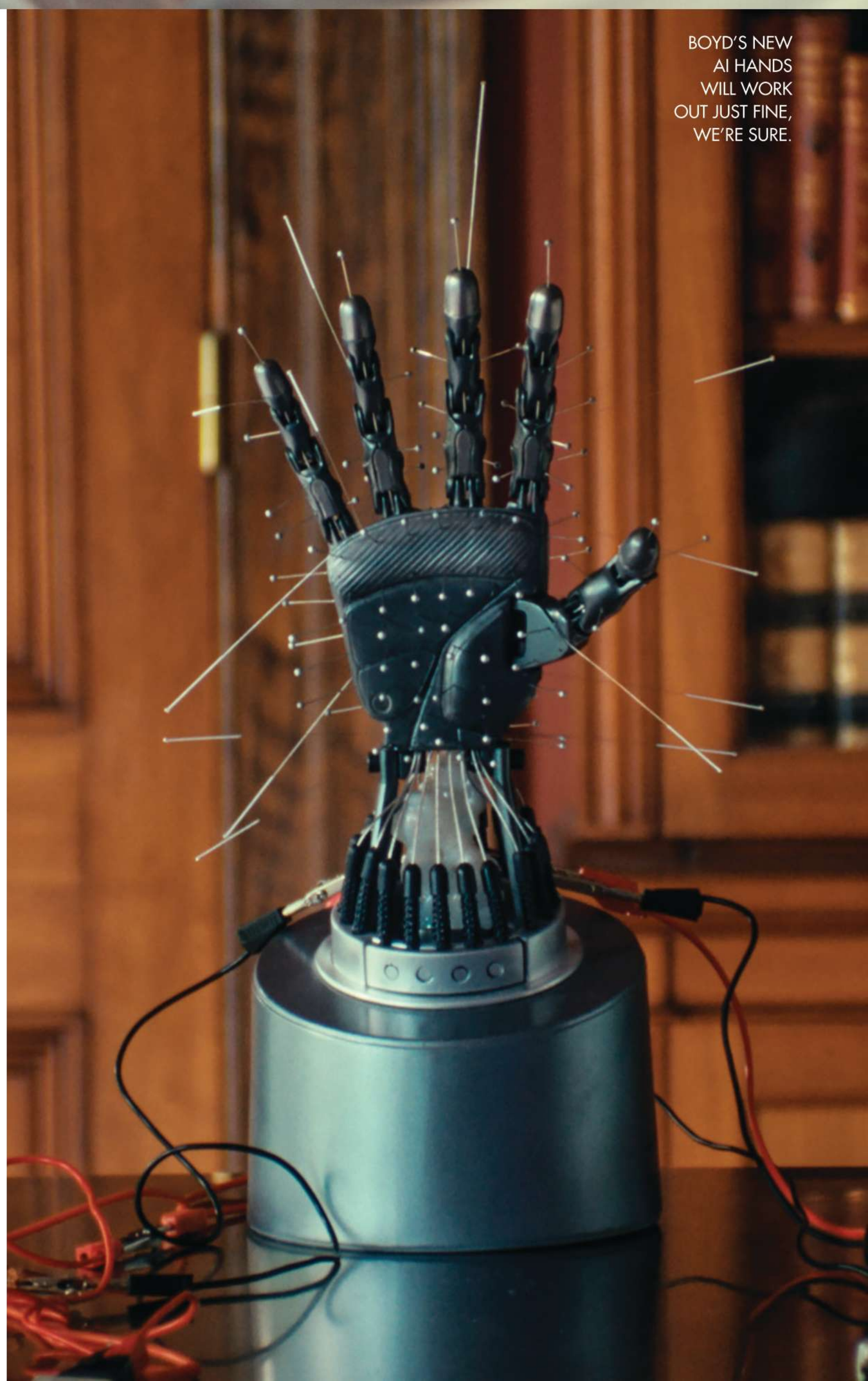
There *is* something terribly unnerving about seeing a severed hand scooting around on its own.

One of my most formative film-watching experiences was watching *The Beast with Five Fingers* with my dad. It's got Peter Lorre in an old Spanish mansion, losing his mind, thinking a severed hand is playing the piano at night. I had a lot of fun with my dad watching that movie... and afterward, he'd pretend to be the severed hand!

Because of that, it's always been on my mind that there was a killer hand subgenre in horror, movies like *Mad Love* and *The Hand* with Michael Caine. I was drawn to the idea of tapping into that space.

I love that you said a large part of this was born out of a fond memory that you had with your dad, because this movie is really centered around a *not* so nice connection with a parent. Could you speak a bit to the very fractured relationship at the center of this story?

Well, really, I wanted to make a movie about the toxic heteronormative weight often placed on queer



BOYD'S NEW AI HANDS WILL WORK OUT JUST FINE, WE'RE SURE.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FANTASTIC FILMS & BANKSIDE FILMS

HAND ON THE RUN!

shoulders. So, that's where that relationship came from. I wanted to address some issues that I had growing up, not with my parents, but with society in general. Growing up in Ireland in the early '80s, it was just… I felt it. I *still* feel it, you know? That push to fit in. I really wanted to tap into that, and the mother/son relationship in this sort of Gothic melodrama seemed like the best way to tackle the material. On the one hand, you've got Boyd (Chris Colfer), who's just out to live his life and be free of all expectations… and on the other, you've got his mother (Jacqueline, played by Alice Krige), who never was able to do that for herself and is now demanding it of him. So really, it came from that theme of what it's like as a queer person to be forced into a heteronormative life. I think the movie also taps into what it's like as a queer person to be paranoid of heterosexuals.

To that end, the relationship between Boyd and his mother is very antagonistic, leading to a thread of extremely dark comedy throughout the film. They're awful to each other, but you get the sense that, for each, there must be something redeeming in the other's eyes. Otherwise, why would they keep coming back? Was that a delicate balance to maintain?

I think, as you say, you have to allow for some redeeming qualities between the two. Although it's in a dream, they do talk about how in the past they had fun and used to dress up together… and they clearly still dress up, but now it's in separate wings of the mansion.

I think a lot of what works came from Clay. He really got the fun, bitchy dynamic down and we just rolled with it from there. Then, when I got on set with Alice and Chris, I was lucky enough to have them for a couple of days before production, so we did a lot of workshopping.

Alice was somewhat nervous because she hadn't quite played to humor very much before. So, during the workshopping process, I was often the third character in the room. I'd take on the role of Jacqueline's bitchy friend and say, "Don't forget what this little shit did to you on your 40th birthday." And then, Alice as Jacqueline would ask, "What did he do?" And I would say, "He was born." I would then say something similar to Chris.

It's interesting to learn that Alice Krige was reticent about the humor. She's played so many baddies and severe characters over her career; we know that she's got ominous down, but she really lands the comedy here and is quite funny.

I think, perhaps, another surprise to genre fans will be Chris Colfer. This is a whole different experience for audience members who maybe know him only for *Glee* or, you know, as the guy who writes children's books.

Chris was the first attached. Actually, we almost made the movie pre-COVID… and then, of course, it all fell apart. I was chatting with Chris right before lockdown and was thrilled to learn that he's actually a horror guy. He's really into it.

I wasn't that familiar with *Glee*. I mean, I knew of it. So, I watched a few episodes and was quite charmed. I also then watched a movie Chris wrote called *Struck by Lightning*. It stars Chris and Allison Janney, and there's a similar barbed nature between them. It's a mom-and-son movie, though very different from my own.

IS IT A SPOILER IF IT HAPPENS BEFORE THE TITLE SCREEN? WE SAY NO.

But I got a real sense of Chris's humor from that. He wrote it and it's quite cunty. So, from the get go, Chris was the guy. Chris was Boyd.

And then lockdown happened. I thought, shit, there goes the movie. But, true to their name, Fantastic Films stood by it… and we eventually made the film.

In my first conversations with Alice, who came to us via our casting agent, I was enamored by her and was trying to play it cool. But by the end, I was just like, "Alice, I don't know if they've told you, but I really want to work with you. Can we work together?" We had a lovely couple of conversations, and she agreed to do it. I could also just see [Chris and Alice] working well together, you know, pairing them.

In many ways, the third main character of this movie is the house itself, which is really smart, especially in a film that is, by and large, a two-hander. You could have easily done a story where they were just in a small place, but you picked a grandiose location. Albeit a location that is, by the title, in disrepair.

Well, to me, Grayson Manor has always had to be a pressure cooker, you know, that anyone who enters it leaves — if they leave at all — changed. Grayson Manor was also very representative of heteronormative weight and heteronormative expectations. So, wanting something grand, but also crumbling, was important. These are old ways and, hopefully, on-their-way-out ways of living and demands.

Grayson Manor also had to represent the weight of Jacqueline's ancestry and give a sense of the world that she grew up in. So, when we found that location, which is a place called Stradbally Hall in County Laois in Ireland, I loved that it came with all that crazy taxidermy and family portraits. We had a lot of fun with those portraits. Jacqueline's pose and stance within the movie is often mimicking them. I love the idea that she's actually somewhat possessed by these ancestors. Her passion about extending the family line, I think, is really so interesting because their relationship is broken, their house is broken, but she's committed to preserving and continuing a broken thing.

DR. TANNOCK IS TASKED WITH HELPING BOYD, BUT AS CLAUDIA (GABRIELA GARCIA VARGAS) AND LEE (DECLAN REYNOLDS) CAN SEE, HE'S GOT HIS OWN PROBLEMS.

Before we go, we do *have* to talk about the hands themselves.

Oh. We had a local outreach in County Laois to get the right hands for the movie, and I think at the start, they must have gone to the pub or something, because the guys that were coming in had these big, gruff, hairy hands… hands that just clearly weren't coming from Chris.

Then one day, this young man came in, Reuben Harvey, who's got the most elegant and dexterous hands. He became our hand actor. On the first day working with Reuben, I said to him, "You know, you've got the hands of a pianist." He was like, "Oh, I am a pianist." Turns out he's a young composer. He sent me his work and I liked it so much that I hired him to co-compose the music with me. So yeah, after all the bother of trying to find the right guy, we ended up with the right guy and also a composer. From a challenge to something really fortuitous.

For audiences who are about to discover *The Restoration at Grayson Manor* for the first time, what would you like them to know?

That it comes from a personal place. And — for as wild and melodramatic as it is — it's a very heartfelt, bananas ride. What I'm hoping that people get out of it is what I got out of horror when I was growing up: escapism and the chance to have a fun time. It's not a project that I was ever wanting to tear the audience's heart out of their chest and shove it down their throat like a lot of horror these days. It's supposed to be just a bit of fun. 💀

This conversation was edited for length and clarity.

SHE SEEMS SO SWEET IN THIS PIC WITH DIRECTOR GLENN MCQUAID, BUT WAIT'LL YOU SEE ALICE KRIGE AS JACQUELINE GRAYSON.

SNUFF ON DEMAND:
RE-IMAGINING

FACES OF DEATH

FOR A JADED WORLD

The filmmakers behind CAM bring their themes and sensibilities to the most infamous horror title of all time.

BY CHARLES BRAMESCO

Evil can fester freely in the suburbs, its private, placid facade giving cover to all manner of the unspeakable. In quiet Luling, Louisiana, in a labyrinthine planned community a half-hour east along the Mississippi from New Orleans, one of the identical houses conceals signs of something ominous: a hidden swinging door that leads down to a basement full of padlocked cages, a garage full of mannequins posed in a firing-squad setup with red electrical-tape Xs over their eyes.

(OPPOSITE PAGE) JOSIE TOTAH PLAYS SAMANTHA GRAVINSKY, AN INFLUENCER STALKED BY THE FILM'S KILLER, ARTHUR SPEVAK (DACRE MONTGOMERY). (THIS PAGE) IT ENDS BADLY.

SAMANTHA RUNS FOR HER LIFE. I FEEL LIKE WE KINDA ALREADY TOLD YOU HOW THAT GOES. SORRY.

MARGOT (BARBIE FERREIRA) STUMBLES INTO A LUNATIC ON THE INTERNET, AND HE PROCEEDS TO TARGET HER AS HIS NEXT VICTIM. RELATABLE AS HELL, TO BE HONEST.

Circa spring 2023, it's here that a new breed of serial killer has been doing his dark work, and in a truer sense, it's the set of the kinda-sorta-not-really remake of *Faces of Death*. Plotted as a straightforward slasher, the film follows content moderator Margot (Barbie Ferreira) as she looks into an unsettling account on a TikTok-esque app posting elaborate recreations of the infamous compilation of gore (both authentic and staged) circulated samizdat-style through the '70s and '80s. But are they just put-ons or the real thing?

When production company Legendary first inquired about dusting off *Faces of Death*, director-cowriter Daniel Goldhaber (*Cam*) saw an opportunity to address "cycles of media violence on the internet" and answer the question of why snuff is being pushed into our feeds.

"Right around when we started writing it, there was a mass shooting at the grocery store less than a mile from where I grew up," Goldhaber recalls. "Eleven people were killed. At the time of the shooting, I was in LA and [cowriter] Isa [Mazzei] was in Fort Collins, and we were watching all these livestreams. There were angles outside, inside, and they all added up to this really profound and disturbing moment for us. A lot of the emotion and anxiety of this experience made it into the movie. We wanted to explore the simultaneous combination of extreme sensitivity with extreme desensitization."

Shot under the winking decoy-title of *Home Movies*, nu-*Faces* takes the original *That's Entertainment!* of mutilations as a jumping-off point for a more modern-minded meditation on how social media has degraded our relationship to the moving image. I'm discussing just that with a crew member responsible for minding the canisters of used film reels when Mazzei gets my attention. "Hey, we're about to kill this guy," she says. "You're not gonna want to miss this."

Things are not looking so good for Neal (Kurt Yue), who's been bound, gagged, and surrounded by jerry-rigged dummies clad in police uniforms. The putting green beneath them is artificial, the cardboard-cutout squad cars are artificial, but the firearms they're wielding are fully operational.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF IFC FILMS, ©LEGENDARY, BY BRIAN ROEDEL

"HEY, WE'RE ABOUT TO KILL THIS GUY, YOU'RE NOT GONNA WANT TO MISS THIS."

-ISA MAZZEI

ARTHUR RECRUITS NEWSCASTER NEAL (KURT YUE) TO RECREATE A *FACES OF DEATH* FAVE.

His captor Arthur Spevak (Dacre Montgomery) isn't just going to murder his quarry; they're all going to put on a good show together, then he'll upload it for his rapidly growing audience on short-form video-sharing platform Kino. (Mazzei oversaw the sourcing of the in-app clips, a process of "Googling snuff, just seeking out the darkest things we could find" helped along by Cloudflare, the same video-licensing service used on *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.)

Arthur supplies Neal with a prop gun and dares him to use it, his taunts mounting until he offers the direction to "just blow my fucking brains out" and ducks behind a mounted smartphone before calling "ACTION!" Arthur pulls a trigger, the mannequins pull theirs, Neal gets lit up and slumps to the ground, leaving a ruby smear on the door behind him. Arthur doesn't bother calling cut before rushing to survey the carnage; after a moment, director Daniel Goldhaber does.

> "THE FIRST FACES OF DEATH, BACK IN THE DAY, YOU HAD TO GO GET IT AT THE VIDEO STORE. NOW, IT'S IN OUR POCKETS."
>
> -BARBIE FERREIRA

His eyes made crimson by contact lenses, as chillingly vacant behind his fabric mask as Tom Noonan in *Manhunter*, Montgomery makes quite a monster. "As a culture, we're like Narcissus, who keeps returning to the pool of water; we can't look away, because we are looking at a version of ourselves," Montgomery explains. "Arthur has a need for recognition that he didn't get from his family or society. He's obsessed with fame, and he wants to regain his sense of identity by getting noticed online. In this way, he's very similar to some of the people we've seen commit horrible acts of murder against innocent people in the last few years."

There's no such thing as a relaxed, leisurely principal photography process, but relative even to the standard, *Faces* is an intense operation. Goldhaber likes to show the details of how characters carry out mechanical processes,

YOU KNOW THAT ROOM YOUR NEIGHBOR DOESN'T WANT YOU TO GO IN? MARGOT WENT IN THAT ROOM.

FERREIRA AND HER GRAVEN IMAGE.

ARTHUR ENJOYING HIS WORK.

which is to say he likes insert shots, adding another degree of stop-and-start to the halting rhythms of a shoot. Talking over the day's shot list with cinematographer Isaac Bauman before they get into the first scene, he sets the goal of forty-ish setups, a number that Bauman suggests may be temporally impossible. By the end of the night — after Arthur's other prisoner, an influencer played by Josie Totah, has made a glass-smashing break for freedom — they've gotten everything they've set out to get.

"As someone who's addicted to their phone, oftentimes I feel like I'm seeing too much, or getting too deep into someone else's life," Totah says. "I just got into RussianTok, and I couldn't get out of it for an entire day. Women in leggings, bouncing back and forth in a kitchen, banging pots and singing in Russian. I was eventually grateful to get out, but still liked having that peek inside… The movie is about that rubbernecking, asking why we look at the car crash and how to look away."

In between brisk, dense shooting sessions, the filmmakers have plenty else on the mental docket: Goldhaber and Mazzei's (at the time of *Face*'s filming) just-released sophomore feature *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* has made them subjects of interest for an array of governmental agencies operating with an extraordinary degree of cooperation, and they wonder whether landing on the federal no-fly list could complicate the promotion schedule for *Pipeline* in Europe after *Faces* wraps. During the morning car ride to set, they excitedly read selections from a scathing pan of *Pipeline* by conservative film critic Armond White, and an email from their new fan James Cameron. In scant spare minutes, Goldhaber is finagling membership in the DGA, plotting several different possibilities for Movie No. 4, hoping to strike while the iron's hot.

Late that night, after all has calmed down, I ask him when things might slow to a more humane pace. "Sometime early next year, I think?" Contrary to his blueprints for the future, *Faces of Death* will sit in stasis on Legendary's shelf for the next three years.

PROOF THAT CHARLI XCX IS IN THIS MOVIE. I THINK I BOUGHT CHEAP TRICK TICKETS OFF THIS CHARACTER AT THE MALL WHEN I WAS A KID.

NOT A TOY.

ARTHUR'S FILMING STUDIO:
WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS.

When needled for an explanation, Goldhaber offers only this: "This is a hardcore, subversive, original movie, and we wanted to make sure it was released with our provocative vision intact. Luckily, IFC was willing to fully stand behind our film, and have been an amazing collaborator in bringing it to audiences."

In any case, the interim time has been kind to the film. (And not just because bit player Charli XCX has become significantly more famous.) Real life has made its sense of desperate concern over a sensory assault of violent small-screen stimuli more urgent and complex; we must now balance our responsibility to bear witness to state-sponsored killings, for instance, against the self-preservation impulse to spare ourselves.

"I grew up in the Wild West Internet, before parents really knew what it was," Ferreira says. "You'd get sent a link, you'd open, who knows what you'd see? My mother's generation was not exposed to so much insane material in such a casual way. How does that affect us? What's that doing to the collective psyche? Who profits from it? The first *Faces of Death*, back in the day, you had to go get it at the video store. Now, it's in our pockets. It's in the air. America has always been addicted to violence, but it's being sold to us in ways it never has been before."

SEEING HIS RECREATIONS OF THE *FACES OF DEATH* KILLS MAKES ONE WISH ARTHUR SPEVAK GOT TO DO ONE OF THOSE FAKE TRAILERS IN *GRINDHOUSE*.

SPOOKY SOUL

DAVID LOWERY'S *MOTHER MARY* IS A HAUNTING TALE, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

BY ISAAC FELDBERG

In David Lowery's darkly intense psychodrama, pop star Mother Mary (Anne Hathaway) calls upon her former friend and fashion designer, Sam Anselm (Michaela Coel), who once shaped her public persona, to make a dress for her comeback tour. At a secluded studio, they instead reopen old wounds and exorcise dangerous inner demons. "Making *Mother Mary*, we were all feeling around the dark for something we couldn't see," Lowery tells FANGORIA, recounting the "haunted" production of his weirdest film to date. "We're still figuring out what it was that we found."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF A24, ©GOT A LITTLE SLOPPY LLC, BY FREDERIC BATIER

After you made *A Ghost Story*, you described your conception of a ghost as "a spirit that refuses to move on." With *Mother Mary*, was that same idea present for you?

I suppose that idea is ingrained in me at this point. It certainly is coming from the same well. I was thinking with *Mother Mary* about the transference of energy, the way in which energy can be exchanged amongst people, between places, across time. I do believe in ghosts, but I believe them to be forces of energy, rather than actual souls wandering this earth. The spirit Sam indeed calls a ghost could also be described as an energetic connection between these two characters that's as supernatural as any phantom.

Mary begs Sam to listen to her new song, "Spooky Action," but Sam doesn't want to hear it. That phrase "spooky action at a distance" refers to quantum entanglement, a notion in physics that two paired particles can instantly affect each other, even when separated by great distances. How did that idea of energetic connection inform the way you wrote and cast these characters?

Physics is so haunted, especially once you get into the quantum realm. My brain's incapable of processing what's happening there mathematically, but I'm here for the abstract metaphors physics affords us. Mary and Sam were both characters born of self-examination. They both represent different aspects of myself. When I began writing, I was trying to figure out who I was and what I wanted to do. At a certain point, that dialogue with myself took on more dimensions, and the characters were freed of the burden of being purely autobiographical.

> "I TOLD ANDREW DROZ PALERMO, MY CINEMATOGRAPHER, THAT THIS WAS GOING TO BE MY GOTH MOVIE."
> – DAVID LOWERY –

I just started writing dialogue, while shooting *The Green Knight*; the first 20 pages made evident it was a screenplay, but the characters needed more. To ensure I wasn't writing a film about a filmmaker, I chose two other art forms I love: pop music and fashion. Out of that, the characters came into their own. On *The Green Knight* and *Peter Pan & Wendy*, my favorite scenes involved two characters having confrontations, uncovering truth through their friction. I realized I'd love to make an entire movie like that — not realizing, at the time, that spending 40 days with two characters in one location is more challenging than spending two days on that within a much larger film.

I especially needed actors who'd have chemistry, tension, or a combination. For *Mother Mary*, I needed someone like Annie, who could walk into a room and convey that innate sense of celebrity. In the case of Michaela, I was blown away by her work on *I May Destroy You*. Meeting her, we talked about both characters but, without even expressing she wanted to play Sam, it was clear she could bring dimensions to Sam beyond anything on the page while also being able to deliver the dialogue as written. When it came out of her mouth, I never felt like I was its author; it felt like it was burning from within her soul.

ANNE HATHAWAY IS MOTHER MARY, A DIVA WITH A DEMON – MAYBE LITERALLY. CAN FASHION DESIGNER SAM (MICHAELA COEL) HELP?

Charli XCX and Jack Antonoff wrote the songs we hear Mother Mary perform, which Anne Hathaway recorded after filming; you cast another pop star, FKA twigs, as a spiritualist who convenes a séance. You had legendary costume designer Bina Daigeler on board as well. Tell me about involving actual pop music and fashion icons in the production.

I listened to FKA twigs a lot while writing the screenplay; the vibe of her music, particularly on *MAGDALENE*, was so tonally in line with what I was after that I knew she had to be part of this movie. She did wind up contributing music as well, because I couldn't *not* have her involved on a musical level. Mother Mary's music, though, needed to be in a different lane from the rest of the film. Jack and Charli — both incredible songwriters — created a sound for the character that was distinct from the movie but still a part of it.

I'm someone who loves fashion but dresses terribly. I wear Lululemon, but I love *haute couture*. In the case of the costumes, I wanted the movie to feel authentic; at the same time, it doesn't lead with fashion. Neither character is walking down a runway. Fashion emerges here and there, but Annie's playing a pop star traveling incognito. Sam has an incredible sense of style, yet we meet her waking up in bed. I'd been a fan of Bina; her work in Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* is legendary. In *Tár*, she took seemingly simple costumes and, in collaboration with Cate Blanchett, made them iconic. How she worked with color for Pedro Almodóvar… Any time I can bring color into my monochromatic goth world, that's exciting.

> "THE MOVIE'S CENTRAL METAPHOR, I'D SAY, IS THE IDEA OF TURNING SOMETHING TERRIBLE INTO SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL."
>
> – DAVID LOWERY –

This brings us to the blood-red dress, that flowing crimson fabric that haunts these characters and heightens the gothic atmosphere.

When I started writing, I told Andrew Droz Palermo, my cinematographer, that this was going to be my goth movie. When location scouting and working with production designer Francesca di Mottola, we kept that in mind. We were also trying to find the movie within the milieu we were making it in. We largely shot on location in a 13th-century barn near Bonn, Germany. There was a lot of strange energy there. That came through in the way we shot it, in the performances, in

MOTHER MARY, SERVING PAIMON VIBES.

SAM CONFRONTS… A DRESS. WE THINK IT'S A DRESS? WE'RE PRETTY SURE IT'S A DRESS. OKAY, MAYBE IT'S NOT A DRESS.

the fact that we were having trouble sleeping at night… The whole movie felt very haunted.

As for the red spirit, the actual ghost in the movie: whether it's metaphorical or literal, these characters feel it's real. Figuring out how to depict that was a challenge that continues to this day; I'll hang up this call and keep working on the visual effects. When I gave people the screenplay, it had an image on the front. I'd painted the initial concept of this red spirit onto a photograph from a Taylor Swift concert. It looked human; over the course of prep, I realized that felt far too literal, like the most basic interpretation of what the script was trying to express. I kept searching for new ways to depict that energy.

There's an elemental language in what these characters have at their disposal: sound and fabric, the tools they use to create their art. I started to think about how we could use those elements to evoke this spirit that's shared between them. That led me to the artwork of Daniel Wurtzel, a sculptor who works with fabric and wind, who helped us bring this ghost to life.

When the red spirit appears to Sam, congealed at the foot of her bed, it reminded me of the creature in Żuławski's *Possession*, before it becomes something more diaphanous.

I'm speaking to you next to a giant French poster of *Possession*. [*laughs*] I love classic '80s visual effects, all that weirdly gross puppetry. I love everything Carlo Rambaldi ever made, from *Possession* to the sandworms in the original *Dune* to *E.T.*, and we were looking at his work when initially designing this ghost. My first sketches looked more like a fetus. Again, it felt too literal. I needed to free it from that interpretation.

In the production office one day, I got a bunch of clay and started sculpting different shapes and forms. I eventually came up with a series of maquettes that suggested the different phases that the ghost would move through. Annell Brodeur — who designed the ghost costume for *A Ghost Story* — turned those maquettes into puppets, until we had three different stages of the ghost in puppet form that ultimately morphed together. Taking a page from Rambaldi, they were classic rod puppets with bellows you could breathe into to make them move.

The movie's central metaphor, I'd say, is the idea of turning something terrible into something beautiful. In that moment in Sam's bedroom, there's this tumor of a ghost that transforms into something ethereal. Our ghosts were entirely practical and done in camera. I loved taking all these old-fashioned effects and combining them to create something new. Despite references to *Possession* and classic Industrial Light & Magic VFX, it does feel like we've scratched the surface of a ghost that's never been seen before.

***Mother Mary* builds to this frightening sequence where Anne Hathaway dances in the barn without music, to show her character's intended choreography for "Spooky Action." She's like a woman possessed. Tell me about guiding her toward that violent, thrashing movement.**

Original drafts of *A Ghost Story* had this scene; Rooney Mara's character was initially going to be a dancer, and I'd written a sequence where she danced with no music to let all her emotion out. It wound up not being

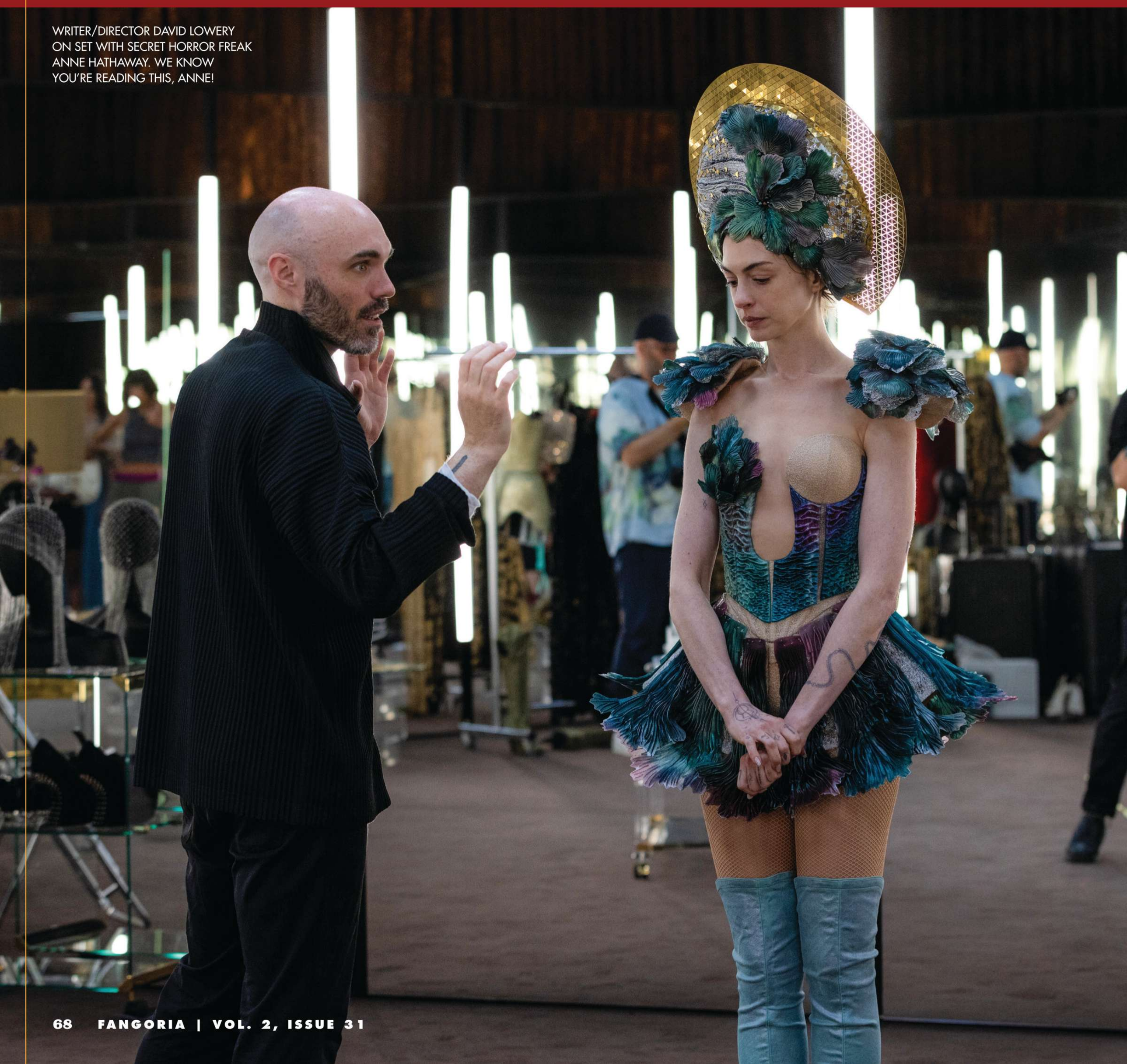
right for that movie, but I knew it would wind up somewhere. When I started writing this script, I quickly knew that scene would be important.

We did not have any music at that point in filming — only early versions of certain songs — but I'd decided we'd never actually hear "Spooky Action," so that dance didn't have to correspond to any one piece of music. I want people to imagine what the song might be like, but the dance became a piece of expression unto itself.

It was what Annie worked on the most, throughout this entire process. She went to "pop star boot camp" when she got the part and started learning how to dance in that way. She had to pack years of training into a few months, working with choreographer Dani Vitale to make it her own, to find movements that could become like language to her, so she could move phrases around and have a lexicon of movement to draw from. Some of it was tightly choreographed, and other parts let her loose with whatever she was feeling, whatever music she heard in her head. She could tap into that internal rhythm and purely express herself through movement, to take everything that we'd talked about and use dance as a way to express it — and to exorcise whatever was possessing her.

We shot that dance three weeks into the shoot. There was so much pressure leading up to it. It weighed on all of us, particularly on Annie, who knew she had to nail it, because that was the moment we'd finally understand Mary. No one knew what to expect. I'd been in rehearsals and seen the process. But, in that barn, with her feet hitting that floor and Michaela standing there watching it all, the energy was completely supernatural. It was the most memorable day of production; we did that first take, and everyone broke into applause. We did it 15 more times, of course, but that first take was truly special. 💀

This conversation was edited for length and clarity.

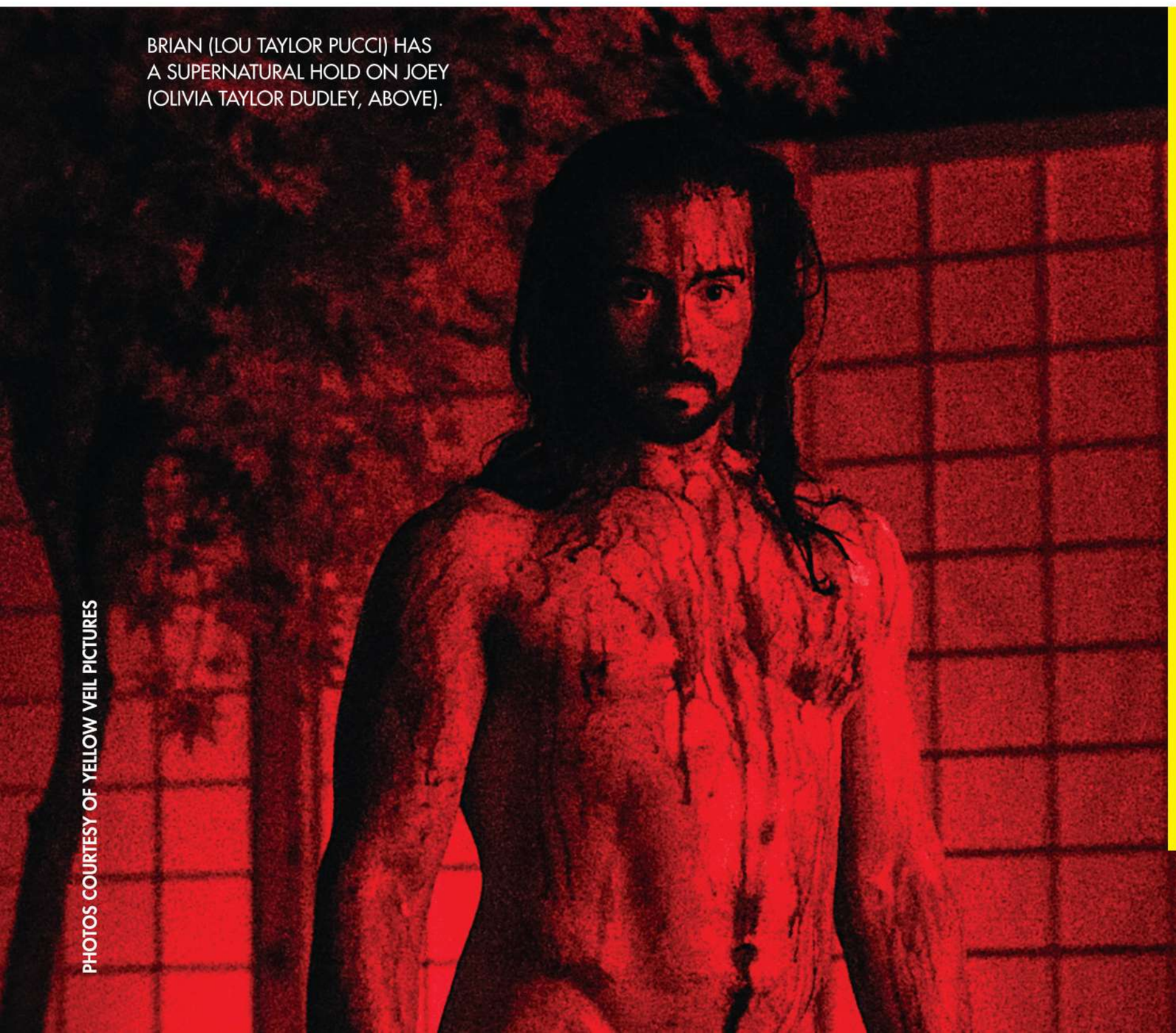


WRITER/DIRECTOR DAVID LOWERY ON SET WITH SECRET HORROR FREAK ANNE HATHAWAY. WE KNOW YOU'RE READING THIS, ANNE!

TOUCHED BY AN A-HOLE

Lou Taylor Pucci is the incredible secret weapon of Addison Heimann's dark and hilarious **TOUCH ME**, playing a manipulative, hip-hop dancing alien douchebag.

BY PHIL NOBILE JR.



BRIAN (LOU TAYLOR PUCCI) HAS A SUPERNATURAL HOLD ON JOEY (OLIVIA TAYLOR DUDLEY, ABOVE).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF YELLOW VEIL PICTURES

Addison Heimann's *Touch Me* is such a rich, layered work that it feels criminal to focus on just one element of the film. The *Hypochondriac* director's tale of a woman named Joey (Olivia Taylor Dudley) who brings her friend Craig (Jordan Gavaris) for moral support as she confronts her narcissistic ex-boyfriend Brian (Lou Taylor Pucci) — who's also an alien plotting to take over the world — is hilarious, emotionally authentic, and really, really horny. Its award for Best Feature Film at last year's Overlook Film Festival (disclosure: this author was on that jury) is wholly deserved.

CRAIG (JORDAN GAVARIS) AND JOEY HEAD TO BRIAN'S COMPOUND TO CONFRONT HIM, BUT END UP COMPETING FOR HIS AFFECTION. THEY FIND OUT THE HARD WAY THERE'S PLENTY OF BRIAN TO GO AROUND.

But when the film opens this spring, it's clear much of the conversation will fixate on Pucci's next-level performance as Brian, a shredded, tracksuit-wearing, hip-hop dancing alien who is physically addictive to those he seduces. Anyone seeing Pucci's *Spring* directors Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead listed as executive producers on *Touch Me* might think they're in for another grounded, humane performance from the actor.

Those people would be wrong.

"Justin, Aaron, and Rustic Films' David Lawson brought me this script," says Pucci. "They have such a love for eclectic horror." But the script came with a ticking clock. "David was like, 'Dude, we got to find somebody within the next three days who wants to play one of the craziest, most manipulative cult leader types in the world who also happens to be an alien, who gives people tentacle sex and sucks them into toxic relationships and enslaves them as part of his deal.' I was like, 'What the fuck?' I was so excited."

So Pucci read the script. Then he read it again. "I said to Addison, 'I have so many questions.'" We'll skip the specifics for spoilers' sake, but those questions involved alien drugs, regenerative biology, and interspecies intercourse. According to Pucci, "Addison had all the answers, which showed me that he wasn't this flippant guy writing a silly comedy. He created a universe, and it had a basis in reality. It's metaphorical and out there, but it's based on toxic relationships and manipulative, narcissistic people using other people. That's what was so attractive about this movie."

Pucci was in. "When you meet that guy, you feel like, 'Okay. He knows his story, and now I trust him because I don't think that he just made this to be funny.' He knows his psychosexual horror, and he knows how to talk about it. This was something that he went through. He had been brought into something that he felt enslaved by and couldn't get out of, and that grounds everything." As far out as *Touch Me* can get (spoiler: very), that theme of toxic relationships will resonate with viewers, Pucci believes. "People are manipulative. I've manipulated before in my younger life, people have manipulated me in my younger life, and it's a dark world out there; this really happens to people."

Pucci next set about creating a charismatic alien who's great at hip-hop dancing.

"The script described a club dude," Pucci laughs. "He's got black chest hair and gold chains. I do not look like that at all, and I don't dance." After dying his hair and beard black (Pucci felt his natural blonde hair gave Brian too Christ-like an appearance, and opted

BRIAN COMMUNES (OR SOMETHING) WITH LAURA (MARLENE FORTE).

for something closer to Jared Leto), the actor hit the dance classes.

"That is the scariest shit I have ever done in my entire life. It's so hard, and it takes so much energy. You're fatigued after a one-hour class." He was relieved to discover he was a quick study. "I started on Broadway as a kid in *The Sound of Music*. I was dancing around a stage when I was 13 years old, so thankfully, I had that developed into me."

Another part of the transformation involved getting absolutely ripped. "I contacted one of my best friends, Eddie Alfano, an actor/bodybuilder. 'Dude, how do I get buff real quick?' He had me pulling 300-pound sleds on day one, and I was looking pretty beefy by day 30."

The real challenge? Learning to convincingly portray the biggest fuckboy in the galaxy.

"Here's the truth: it's kind of hard for me to be overly sexual as a person," Pucci shares. "I'm not a person who's very touchy-feely. Brian is going to gaze at you from across the room, suck you into his orbit, touch your arm and touch your face and make you feel strangely comfortable with him too quickly in order to use you. I had to be comfortable with being like that."

After being discussed but not seen for the first act of the film, Pucci's Brian makes an iconic entrance, and it's evocative of two other cinematic characters whom Pucci looked toward for inspiration. "I thought of Willy Wonka," Pucci reveals. "Half-hour in, Gene Wilder takes these people out of their grounded normal life and brings them into a really strange, colorful world. That's how I saw Brian." The other character inspo, considering the sexual antics that follow Brian's entrance, makes a lot of sense. "The other guy I'd say really inspired me is Tim Curry in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* as Dr. Frank-N-Furter," Pucci says. "I feel like those are cartoonish characters, but I was always trying to figure out, 'How characterized or animated can I be?' We found this happy medium, because we didn't want him to be too insane, too zany, to the point that you didn't believe him."

TRUST US, JUST GO WITH IT.

Pucci is quick to credit his co-stars Jordan Gavaris ("he's insane!") and especially Olivia Taylor Dudley for facilitating a space where he could become the sleazy, manipulative cosmic paramour. "He falls in love, at least whatever he believes love is, with this woman," he says. "Olivia and I had this immediate chemistry, and we knew that we could play those characters who were infatuated with each other. When I met her, we just knew we were going to have a lot of fun with this." Pucci also beams at the mention of co-star Marlene Forte, who plays Brian's inscrutable assistant Laura. "She's a demon in this movie. She's the scariest person ever."

Pucci plans to stay close to genre, with the upcoming MGM+ series *Winthrop*, based on Soren Narnia's popular *Knifepoint Horror* podcast episode "The Lockbox." "I play an ex-army guy with PTSD whose cousin (played by Carla Gugino) is being charitable and letting him live with her, but it brings into her life a monster. Whether I'm the monster or not, that's what you have to figure out." After that, he and filmmaker Johnny Coffeen are unleashing a passion project called *The Avalanche* with Alex Essoe (*Starry Eyes*). "It's about two ex-lovers who get trapped together during an avalanche," Pucci says, adding "it's a full-on Lynchian nightmare. It's black-and-white, and we just made it on our own. We all lived in a cabin together where we were filming; it was just something that we really wanted to make happen. It's a really weird art piece."

Sounds as if it would be tough to be weirder than playing an alien creep using pickup artist tactics to have tentacle sex with humans, but if Pucci's got a penchant for one thing (besides sick hip-hop moves), it's surprising horror fans.

THE *TOUCH ME* CREW CAPTURES THE CAGED CHAOS OF BRIAN'S COMPOUND.

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD

BLOOD SHINE

JOIN THE FAMILY

FANGO HEADS TO THE SET OF THE *ALONE WITH YOU* FILMMAKERS' CREEPY FOLLOW-UP.

The creation of posters for fictitious movies within movies is an art form within an art form and, although it's done fairly often, it's not often done well. The *faux* one-sheets simply aren't always convincing as real-world promotional images. However, three exceptions were noted adorning the walls of a small Brooklyn set during FANGORIA's visit to the independent shocker *Blood Shine*.

CLARA (EMILY BENNETT, RIGHT AND BELOW) HOSTS A SPECIAL GUEST IN THE ATTIC.

Beneath the trio of authentic-looking mounted posters for the *Craven* film trilogy, bearing taglines like "Fear has a face, and he's watching you," actors David Call and Madeleine Charmaine Morrell are "asleep" in a big, black-sheeted bed. Call, playing *Craven* filmmaker Brighton West, sits up, picks up a smartphone, and begins talking to his manager. Morrell, as aspiring actress Grey Mills, also rises, and, with Brighton caught up in his business conversation, dresses quickly and leaves. Once she's gone, Brighton quickly drops the phone — revealing he faked the call to get rid of her.

This is all preamble to the main business of *Blood Shine*, establishing Brighton as a callous, disillusioned man who's lost the passion for his craft. The *Blood Shine* team will soon head to upstate New York to film the meat of the story, in which Brighton becomes the captive of a mysterious young woman named Clara, played by Emily Bennett. She's also the writer and director of *Blood Shine* with Justin Brooks, following up their debut feature *Alone With You*, which earned them the "Eyeball on the Future" prize at FANGORIA's 2023 Chainsaw Awards.

When considering how to follow up *Alone*, Bennett says, "I grew up in the Bible Belt, and I really wanted to play someone driven by faith, and with a deep, unshakable belief in something. We also wanted to make a movie

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAPER STREET PICTURES • (BOTTOM) BY ALEX SCHEPSMAN

BRIGHTON (DAVID CALL) ADAPTS TO CLARA'S HOSPITALITY AS BEST HE CAN.

that was totally different from *Alone With You*, which is such a claustrophobic film. We wanted to broaden the production value, the world… just everything about it."

"*Alone With You* is a movie we're tremendously proud of," Brooks adds, "and we love that that's where we got started, but it was important to us to show that we can control a larger, more nuanced and interesting world."

Clara's world is defined by her devotion to a cult guru known only as the Leader (Larry Fessenden), who appears on VHS tapes she obsessively watches. Under this "direction," she imprisons Brighton and subjects him to a series of painful rituals intended to transform him into a higher being. And yet *Blood Shine* is not a simple "torture porn" flick, and the unusual relationship that develops between the two makes this as much a psychological horror story as a visceral one.

"We really wanted to pit opposites against each other," Bennett explains. "Those opposites are the country vs. the city, and light, ethereal beauty meeting vicious blood and gore. My character is very much based in rural America: deep faith, very analog, removed from Wi-Fi technology, and she meets her polar opposite: this douchebag filmmaker. He's deeply ingrained in the Hollywood system and trying to return to the inspiration he once had."

"But they share this absolute need for purpose in their lives," Brooks says. "And that's where we find that connection between the two of them, even though each one's purpose is completely different — on opposite sides of the spectrum."

"Then they begin to challenge each other in ways they neither expected," Bennett continues. "And it blossoms into a very bloody story of redemption and connection in an impossible place."

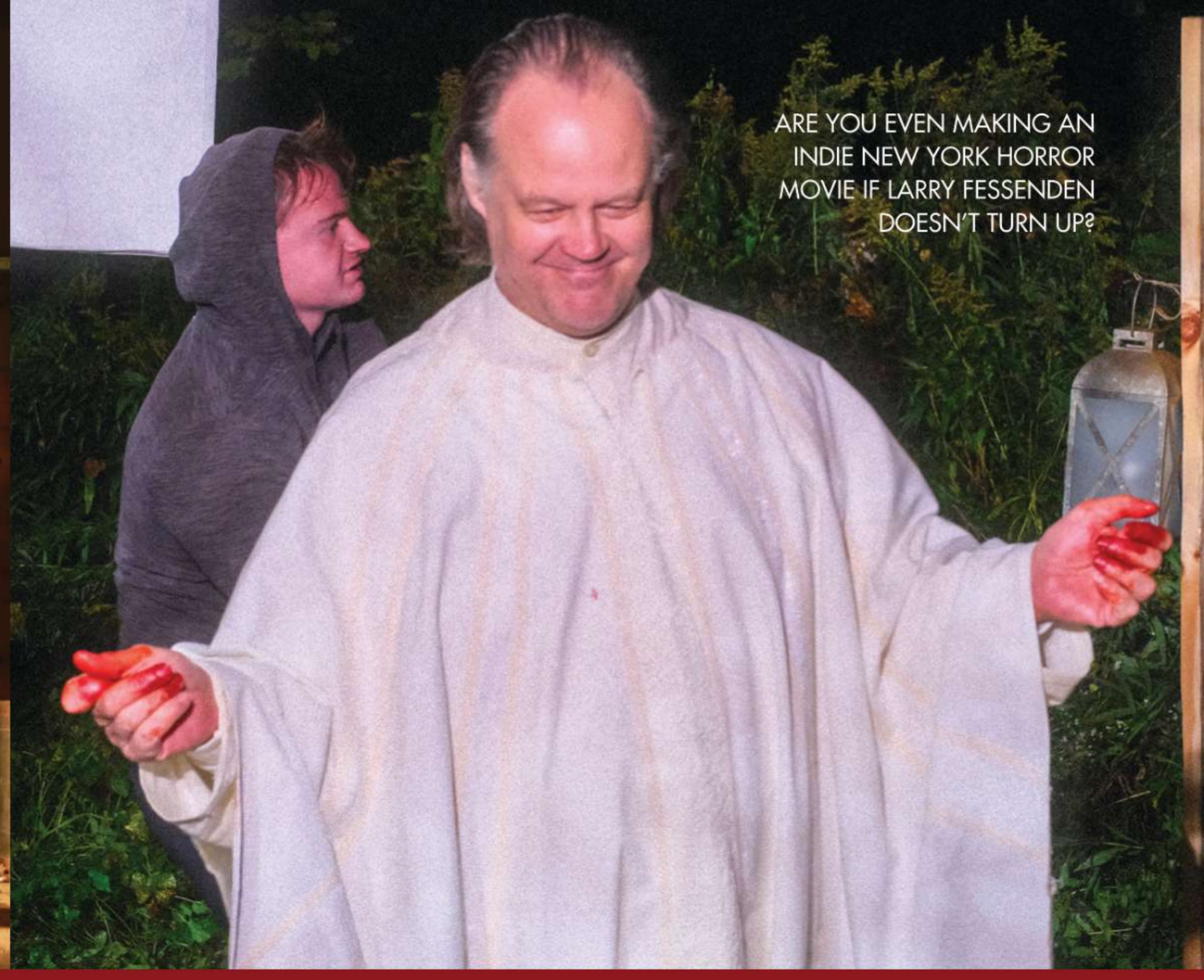
The duality underpinning *Blood Shine* extends to the cinematic influences Bennett cites: "Two of our biggest inspirations are *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Martyrs*." This movie's approach to its bloodletting echoes that of the latter and others in the New French Extremity movement. "The violence was always so purposeful to the story," Brooks says. "You understood

> THE VIOLENCE WAS ALWAYS SO PURPOSEFUL TO THE STORY, YOU UNDERSTOOD WHY IT WAS THERE. IT WASN'T VIOLENCE FOR VIOLENCE'S SAKE; IT ACTUALLY MOVED THE STORY ALONG. SO THAT WAS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO THIS FILM. EVERYTHING HAD TO GO TOWARD THE STORY, ALWAYS. NOTHING IN THE FILM IS WITHOUT PURPOSE.
>
> - JUSTIN BROOKS -

FANGO'S MICHAEL GINGOLD WITH FILMMAKERS EMILY BENNETT AND JUSTIN BROOKS.

(FACING PAGE) TOP LEFT BY PAULA LABLOISE, TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM RIGHT BY ALEX SCHEPSMAN

CLARA AND BRIGHTON'S UNUSUAL RELATIONSHIP EVOLVES OVER THE COURSE OF THE FILM, AND UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF BROOKS AND (L-R), SCRIPT SUPERVISOR DAVID B. JACOBS, STUNT COORDINATOR ANTHONY VINCENT, AND UPM/AD/CO-PRODUCER KEVIN MURPHY.



ARE YOU EVEN MAKING AN INDIE NEW YORK HORROR MOVIE IF LARRY FESSENDEN DOESN'T TURN UP?

why it was there. It wasn't violence for violence's sake; it actually moved the story along. So that was always important to this film. Everything had to go toward the story, always. Nothing in the film is without purpose."

Even the casting of Fessenden has meaning for the duo. "Growing up," Bennett recalls, "my mother had Bible-study VHS tapes, for if she couldn't make it to church that weekend or something. And the tapes that Clara watches are very much in line with that, since [the Leader] is kind of [her] preacher. He asked me how to approach the character of the Leader, and I told him, 'Larry, it's basically what you do with young filmmakers. You're guiding us; you are the person we're looking toward.'"

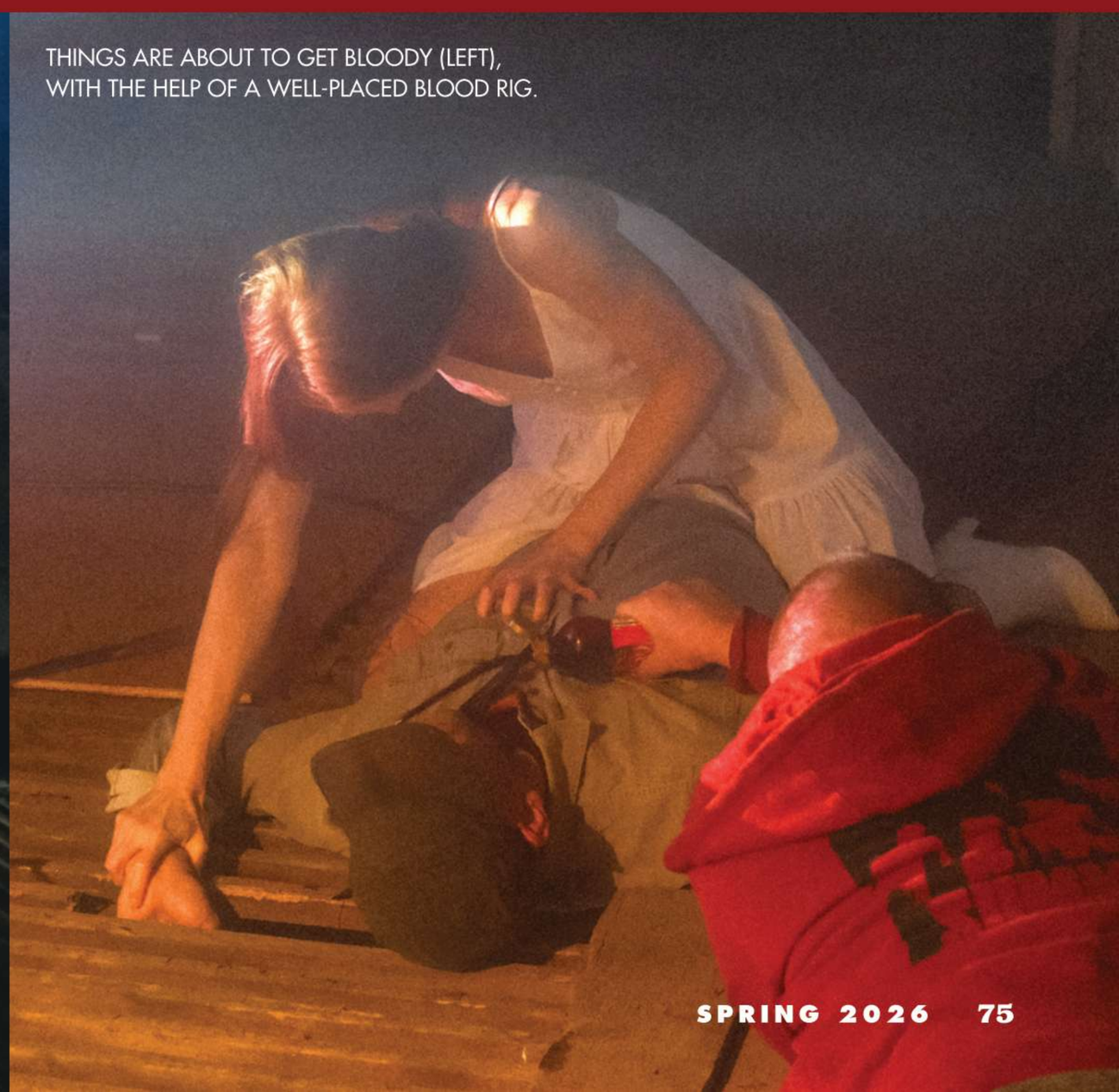
"Once Larry understood that this wasn't a maniacal leader," Brooks says, "but somebody who cares very much for his followers, he found [the character] so easily, because he knows it. He has supported so many new filmmakers through the years that he fell very quickly into the role."

Fessenden isn't the only member of the extended New York-area filmmaking "family" with a part in *Blood Shine*; Call starred in Fessenden's *Depraved*, and the Adams family's Toby Poser has a key supporting role. Behind the scenes, Fessenden's longtime makeup effects creator Brian Spears is creating the grue, with regular Adams collaborator Trey Lindsay handling the visual effects.

"We couldn't be more excited to work with Brian," Bennett says. "He joined this, I think, partially because Larry was attached, but we're working with the best of the best. This is a very indie film, and we are pushing our limits, but we did not sacrifice on the practical. That line item in the budget, we were like, 'No, we have to celebrate the practical effects.' And Trey is incredible. His stuff is so tactile, and they'll work great together."

Lindsay made one other physical contribution to the *Blood Shine* production: those *Craven* trilogy posters. "A lot of the faces on those are his," Brooks reveals, "and Halloween costumes he's done through the years. He also came up with some of the taglines, which are amazing, like 'Fear is the new frontier' on the space poster [*Craven III: Darkest Night*]."

"Yeah," Bennett laughs, "our producer has already laid claim to that one!" 💀



THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET BLOODY (LEFT), WITH THE HELP OF A WELL-PLACED BLOOD RIG.

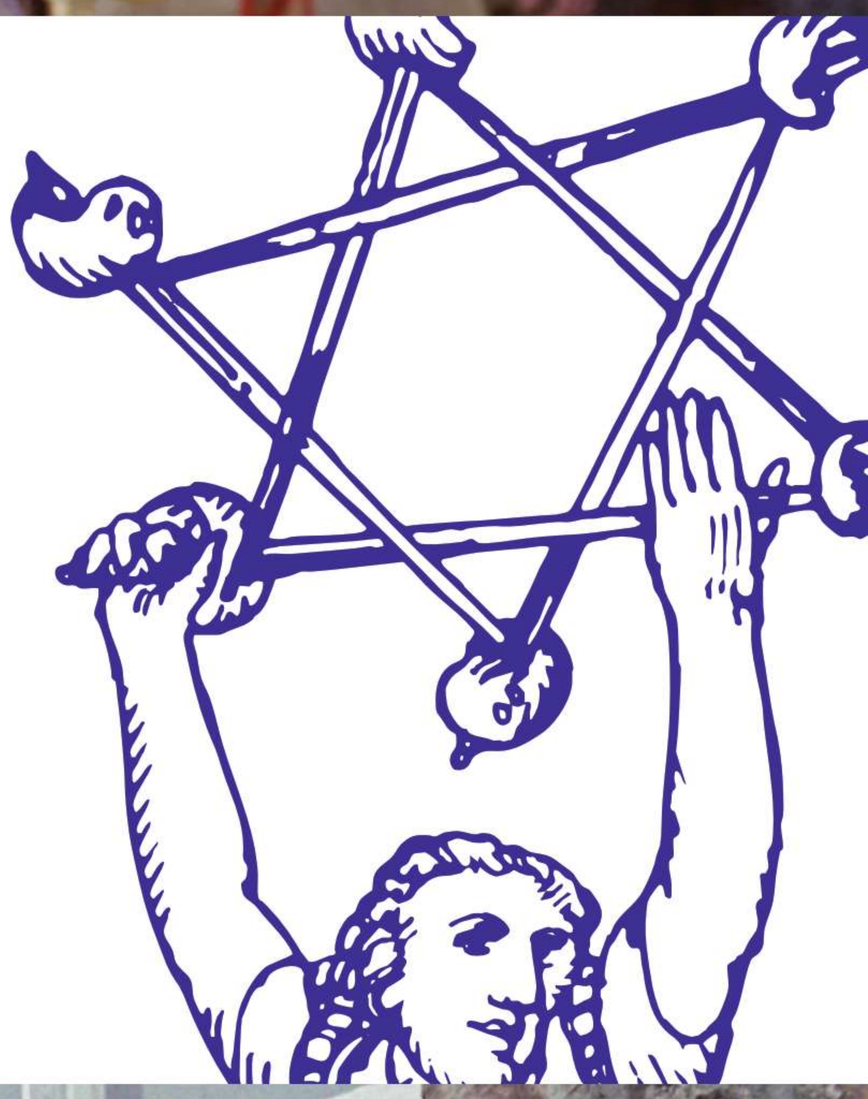
THE RIGHTS OF SPRING

The filmmaker behind BLOOD SHINE shares some of the film's cinematic inspirations.

BY EMILY BENNETT

INGRID PITT (FACING PAGE), CHRISTOPHER LEE, AND FRIENDS (BELOW) IN ICONIC MOMENTS FROM *THE WICKER MAN*.

Spring is a strange and uncanny season. Snow melts and the once-dead natural world resurrects itself and rises from the grave, clawing out of the earth to flourish again. For centuries, pagan cultures have rightfully worshipped this miraculous time, constructing rituals and ceremonies for the season. A deeply influential book in the folk horror genre, *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer, states that primitive man adopted "rites intended to ensure the revival of nature in spring," and that by "masquerading in leaves and flowers he helped the bare earth to clothe herself in verdure." But when these ecstatic, ancient practices clashed with more puritanical and "civilized" societies, well... all hell broke loose. Some of the most quintessential folk horror films focus on this tension between the puritanical and the pagan, and I'd like to ring in the spring season by celebrating some of my favorites. Spoilers to follow...



One of the most foundational folk horror films is *The Wicker Man* (1973), directed by Robin Hardy. The film focuses on the eponymous wicker structure that was actually recorded in the text *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, written by Gaius Julius Caesar (58-50 BC). These texts spoke about the Celtic Gauls and their priestly class of Druids who used giant wicker structures for human sacrifices. The Gauls believed these sacrifices brought about fertility and abundance in their land. This is precisely the community's focus on the fictional island of Summerisle, who draw a prudish, colonial-like Edward Woodward into their wicker-web. Inspired by Caesar's

THE WAILING BRINGS FOLK HORROR TO KOREA, AS JONG-GOO (KWAK DO-WON) INVESTIGATES A DEADLY VIRUS.

texts, the Summerisle citizens burn Woodward alive in a wicker man structure as they dance and sing in reverence to the natural world. This film is perhaps the most classic example of puritanical vs. pagan society in folk horror cinema, and continues to inspire filmmakers like Ari Aster to this day.

Another horror film that clearly showcases the tension between Christian beliefs and pagan folklore is the Korean modern classic *The Wailing* (2016), directed by Na Hong-jin. This twisted detective story delves deep into folklore and faith in the real-life Korean town of Gokseong. The film follows police officer Jong-goo as he pursues a Japanese stranger he suspects is responsible for bringing a deadly, zombie-like virus into his small town. The film quickly descends into a literal hell, and showcases Korean shamanistic beliefs contrasted with traditional Christian influences. A Japanese-speaking deacon, Yang I-sam, guides Officer Jong-goo by dismissing his supernatural fears and rationalizing the horrific events through traditional Catholic doctrine. But as the horrors mount, the deacon abandons everything he once stood for. In a panicked retreat he flees the town, abandoning his once-steadfast faith in the face of pure evil. The demon responsible for the murders speaks directly to Yang I-sam while taking photos of him. As Yang I-sam cries, horrified that the vengeful evil is real, the demon simply giggles and snaps his camera, fully taking control of the narrative and proving just how feeble the deacon's faith truly is.

THE WITCH ASKS IF THOU WOULDST LIKE TO LIVE DELICIOUSLY, AND GETS ITS ANSWER FROM THOMASIN (ANYA TAYLOR-JOY).

The third film to round out my lovely folk horror bouquet is Robert Eggers' debut feature *The Witch: A New England Folk Tale*. Leave it to the historically-obsessed Eggers to draw from real accounts of witchcraft in an early Puritanical America. The film is set in 1630, around sixty years prior to the Salem Witch Trials. In it, a devout Separatist family of seven leaves their colony to strike out in the wilderness on their own. Why? The father, William, believes he's even more Christian than the townspeople, so they exile him from the town. Now *that's* faith that even Edward Woodward might envy. As William tries to uphold his strict religious practices and tame the wild land, the land fights back, and the family descends into a paranoid, bloody fight for survival. William's puritanical hubris is put to the test when a naturally-occurring fungus begins killing their corn crops. Historically, ergot poisoning, also known as St. Anthony's Fire, was an actual fungal phenomenon that coincided with the Salem Witch Trials. Many historians believe this fungus, which grew on corn crops at the time, was the cause of terrifying visions, delusions and convulsions that affected the citizens of Salem. When you're tripping hard on hallucinogenic fungus, it's probably a lot easier to go a little mad. Some viewers have reasoned that an ergot-induced psychosis is what rips away the puritanical structure of the family in *The Witch*, exposing the powerlessness man has over nature. The ecstatic ending sees Thomasin, our leading lady, make a pact with the devil, disrobe and fly with her sister witches into the night. She submits to the power of pagan practices in a glorious return to the natural world.

Like Thomasin, I hope we can all return to the natural world now that springtime is here! And perhaps, as you see symbols of rebirth, painted eggs and the Easter Bunny in your daily life, take a moment to appreciate the pagan roots from whence they came. After all, this ideological tension makes folk horror films and springtime just a little more fun. 💀

DREAD AND LOVING IT

BY YULISSA MORALES

CATCHING UP WITH *UNCLE PECKERHEAD*

To quote the magnificent Boulet Brothers, "Hello Uglies!" It's your girl, Yulissa Andrea Morales Leon Delgado. Your favorite Colombian American genre gremlin is here to tell ya what's been going on over here at DREAD, and a lot has been happening!

First up, there's a pretty rad shake up that Fango reported on with Brad Miska and his team taking over *Dread Central*. I've always admired what he's done in the horror space. He's a true pioneer and I can't wait to see the new heights *Dread Central* will reach with him at the helm.

Now, usually I talk about the horrors that are on the horizon, but this time I thought I'd take the opportunity to highlight a film from the DREAD catalog that is one of my all-time favorite releases that just so happens to be celebrating its six-year anniversary — *Uncle Peckerhead*.

Uncle Peckerhead, in my opinion, is the most punk rock horror comedy you will ever see/instantly fall in love with. It's like a happy version of *Green Room*, kind of… Let me explain!

The film follows my favorite fictional band DUH, a trio of lovable punks brilliantly played by Chet Siegel, Ruby McCollister and IRL punk Jeff Riddle of 500 Bucks. They're in desperate need of a van after theirs gets repossessed just as they are about to take off on their first tour. And who appears in the knick of time to bail them out? A roadie by the name of Uncle Peckerhead — "Peck" to his friends — played by the elite David Littleton. He's no normal roadie though; rather, he's of the demon variety, and takes care of any issues on the road by any means necessary. This usually means violently devouring anyone who even looks at the band wrong.

THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE DEMON: UNCLE PECKERHEAD (DAVID LITTLETON).

PHOTO COURTESY OF DREAD

What follows is a gnarly, gory, and actually kinda sweet ride as DUH tries to make it out of their first tour alive. Metalheads get their heads ripped off, bowels get removed and blood sprays from every direction. Writer and director Matthew John Lawrence has described the film as "a love letter to underground scenes, made by local filmmakers, punk musicians, and comedians on a shoestring budget and a shared belief that the best horror comes from the margins." He's the kind of filmmaker that gives me hope for the genre, and he's been keeping busy with this latest offering, *Bloody Axe Wound*. Fun fact: that project came about after Jeffrey Dean Morgan saw *Uncle Peckerhead* and became a fan. Yes, the movie is that good!

Uncle Peckerhead was released in 2020 (jump scare!) and to date still holds a 100% critics score on Rotten Tomatoes. It's crazy to me that it's already been over six years since movie theaters, along with the rest of the world, shut down for a chunk of time. It was tough to put out films without the theatrical releases that they would typically get. Reaching you, the horror audience, was harder than ever and trust me, even under normal circumstances it's difficult to have independent films break through. In step with the film's DIY spirit, the team put together an East Coast road show. Each event featured screenings of the film, live Q&As and a full-on musical performance by Five Hundred Bucks performing the music of DUH. You had to be there.

This film will always be special to me; you'll catch me in my DUH merch pretty regularly, and I will never stop preaching the Peck gospel. If you somehow missed it the first time around, now's your chance to join the DUH fan club and celebrate a true cult gem. You can stream it anywhere you get your movies.

ENDLESS “night”

WITH *PARTIALLY DEVOURED*, DANIEL KRAUS EXAMINES HOW GEORGE A. ROMERO’S 1968 CLASSIC CONTINUES TO SHAPE HIM.

By Matthew Jackson

“I do know that, and I’ve only said this about one other book ever, it is a book I could have written forever,” Daniel Kraus says from his home in Chicago. “I did almost write it forever.”

In 2023, while doing press for his novel *Whalefall* (soon to be a Brian Duffield film), Kraus sat down “on a lark” and wrote about his favorite movie. He pressed play on *Night of the Living Dead*, watched the first shot, and started typing. Then he watched the next shot, and the next, and soon it was much more than a lark. “I’ve watched a minute of this movie, and I’ve got 20 pages of the book,” Kraus remembers thinking. “I wonder how long I can keep this up.”

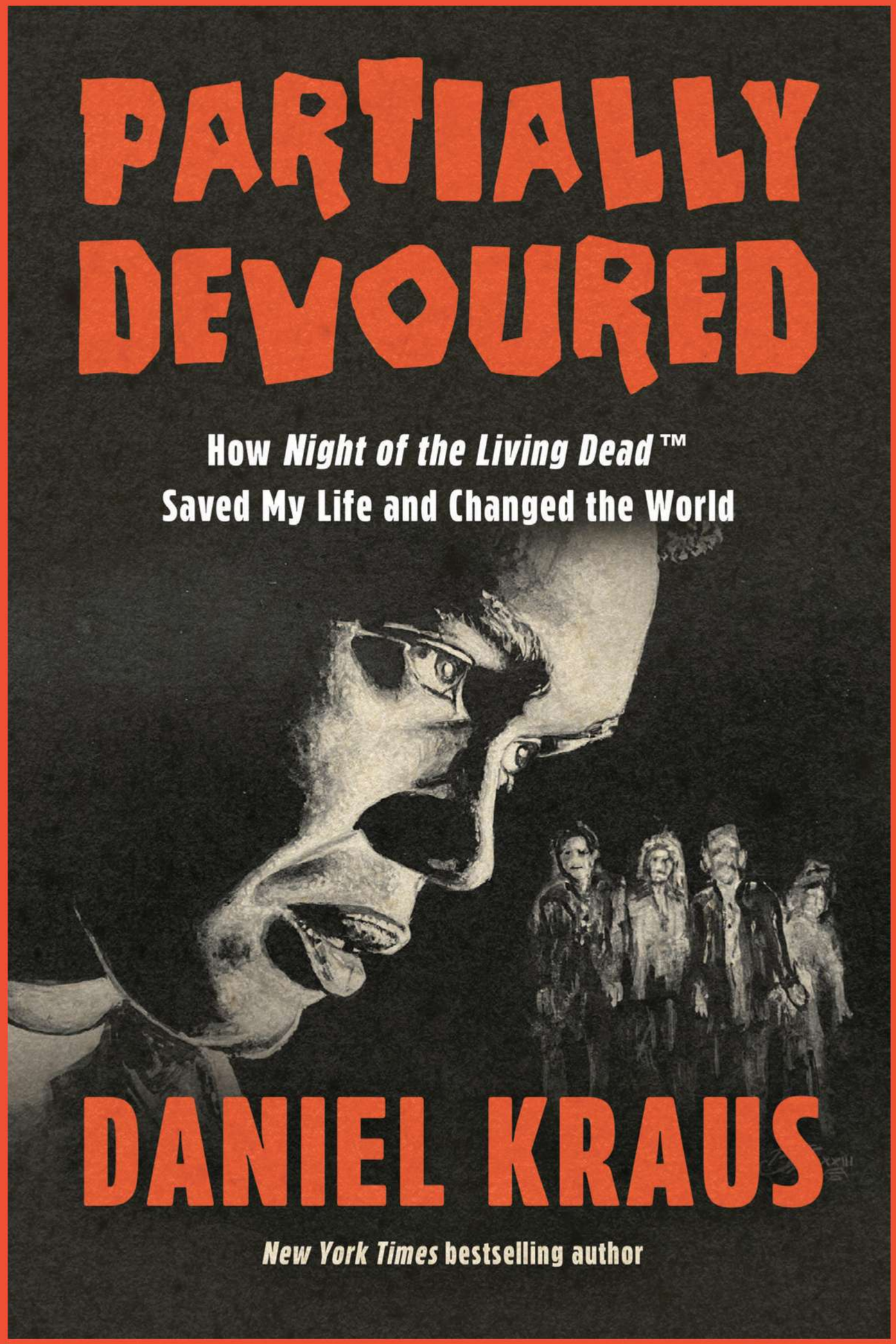
Three years later, we have *Partially Devoured: How Night of the Living Dead Saved My Life and Changed the World*, a hybrid memoir and autopsy of one of the most important horror movies ever, from the writer who brought us *The Shape of Water*, *Angel Down*, and more.

Kraus is far from the first writer to dive deep into *Night of the Living Dead*, a film that looms so large in the horror landscape that we still can't measure the length of its shadows. Reams of work analyzing the film exist in virtually every format, so why is Kraus' book different? Because, as the writer who completed George A. Romero's unfinished novels *The Living Dead* and *Pay The Piper*, Kraus has a unique place in *Night*'s legacy.

"I think Dan got the characters," Romero's widow, Suzanne Desrocher-Romero, tells Fango. "I think the descriptions of the events were very wordy [compared to George's writing], but the language of the words that the characters said were basically almost all true Romero." Asked what made Kraus the right person to continue Romero's zombie work, Desrocher-Romero had a simple answer: "It was instinct. It was gut. We just felt that he was the right guy, and so he went ahead."

But *Partially Devoured* is not the *Night of the Living Dead* story told by an insider. Kraus approaches the book first as a fan, but also as a dogged researcher, tracking down every fact possible about how *Night* was made. The book weaves these facts seamlessly with stories from Kraus's own life, including watching *Night of the Living Dead* with his mother at age five, and his own analysis of the film itself. Along the way, he found something miraculous: a movie full of amateur mistakes that cast their own kind of indie-landmark spell.

"It's a mess, and none of that penetrates on the first many viewings," Kraus explains "When it does, it just creates, in me anyway, this sense of wonder and gladness, like, 'Here are the fingerprints of their amateurness all over this.' All you have to do is stop and look. It endears them to me."


PARTIALLY DEVOURED
How *Night of the Living Dead* ™
Saved My Life and Changed the World
DANIEL KRAUS
New York Times bestselling author

Kraus could have written *Partially Devoured* at any point in his writing career. He calls *Night of the Living Dead* his *Star Wars*. It's the only film for which he collects merchandise. It's his origin story. But helping the departed Romero complete *The Living Dead*, the director's only stab at an epic zombie novel, put Kraus in a "weird spot" in the Romero legacy. Because he's also excavated the depths of Romero's archives at the University of Pittsburgh, he brings an added richness that few other writers could have achieved.

"I'd always known a lot about George Romero, but once I did the research required for *Living Dead* and *Pay the Piper*, I knew a lot more about him," Kraus says. "I had an inkling that there was a lot more to talk about."

For those still charged with caring for Romero's history and body of work, Kraus's contributions go beyond finding more to talk about. They're about growing the legacy through a celebrated contemporary genre voice. "Dan has modernized the Romero legacy," Jeff Whitehead, COO of the George A. Romero Foundation, tells FANGORIA. "Dan actually helps continue to reach new generations. Once you start digging through the archive, you can see just how big [George's] opus is. It's incredible. Dan has helped expose that."

And what does Kraus get in return, apart from book deals? Understanding. It's not often that we get to build onto the stories we grew up loving, or set aside time to slow down and completely unpack them. With *Partially Devoured*, Kraus has done both. "To think that those few people in that little town affected me and my little town in a way that crossed time and space and everything pre-Internet, is pretty amazing," he says. "It gives you hope about the power of art. Maybe that's the last message of this book. It's another reminder that we're all greatly affected by art." 💀

***Partially Devoured* is now available wherever books are sold.**

SCARY BITCH ALERT

How **THE CRAFT**'s screenwriter called the corners for a generation of young women – and delivered an enduring genre classic.

BY KIMBERLY LESZAK • PAINTINGS BY TESS GIVNISH • PHOTOGRAPHS BY SINNSTAX PHOTO + MEDIA

Teenage girls are never beating the allegations: bratty, moody, dramatic, and not good at math (despite the data saying otherwise). However, having been one myself, something most of us only realize in hindsight is this: they excel at magic. Maybe not in the traditional sense, but throughout their adolescence, girls are experiencing an unfathomable intensity, a chaotic energy that should be both protected and feared.

My introduction to that magic, sacred space unfolded when I first watched Andrew Fleming's 1996 coming-of-age occult horror *The Craft*. Sarah Bailey (Robin Tunney), Nancy Downs (Fairuza Balk), Bonnie Harper (Neve Campbell), and Rochelle Zimmerman (Rachel True) were the *Clueless* ensemble for poor kids, misfits, latchkey girls, and other under-celebrated badasses. While quintessentially '90s and deeply rooted in the Anne Rice-centric alternative culture of the era, the film still feels timeless on its 30th anniversary.

Screenwriter Peter Filardi (*Flatliners*, *Ricky 6* and here co-writing with Fleming) fondly recalls the time he spent developing his story for the film and the impact his four "corners" had on generations of young women. As a career outsider and daughter of *The Craft*, I was excited to spend a weekend getting to know Peter at last year's Chattanooga Film Festival, where we did a post-screening Q&A together. On stage, he told me that while drafting the screenplay, he had a thought that he would one day meet these girls he was writing; thirty years later, that premonition has come true again and again, as he continues to encounter women and girls influenced by his story.

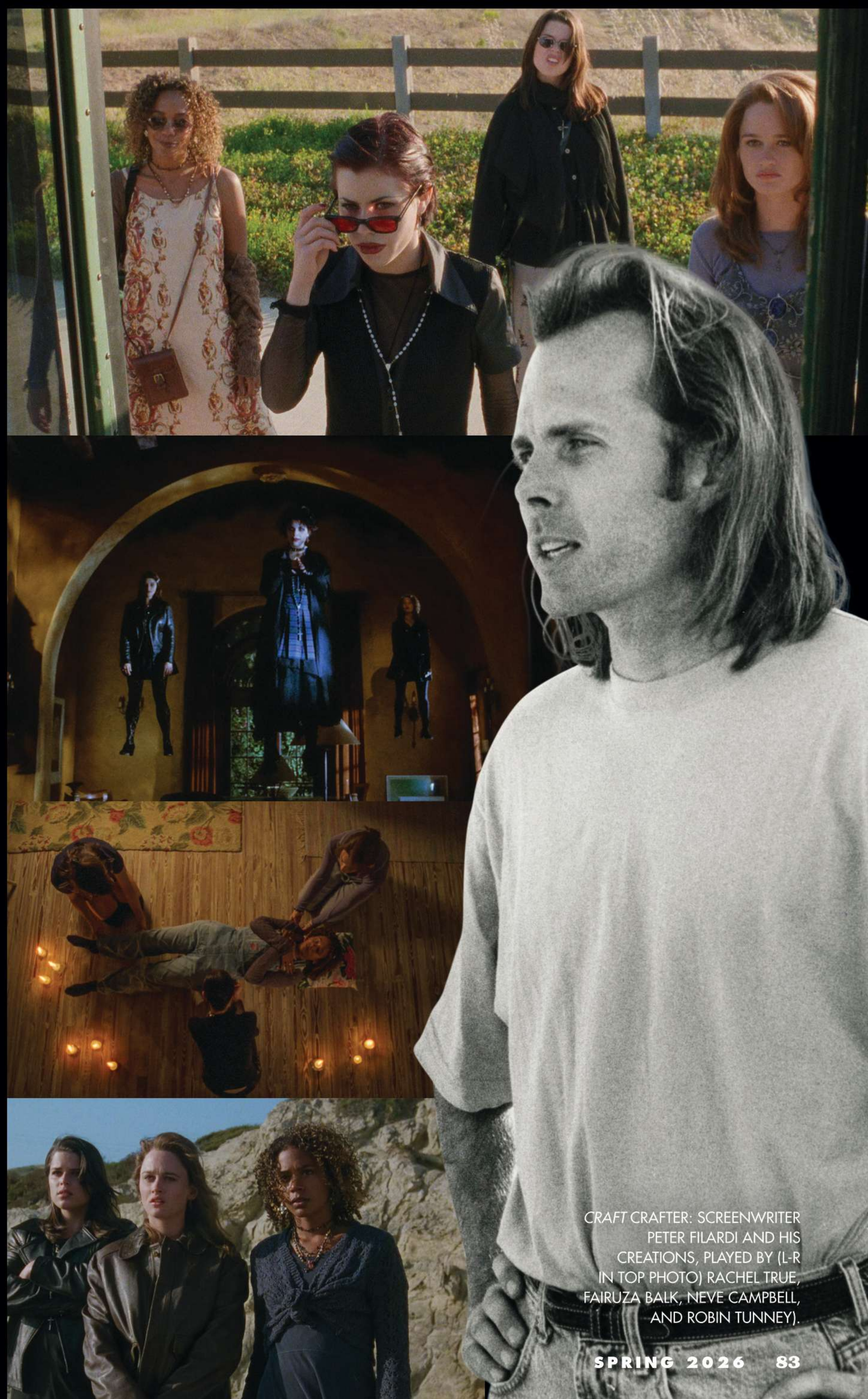
What made you want to write *The Craft*?

After *Flatliners*, I was looking for a new frontier to explore in my writing. Something fresh. At the same time, I was 28 years old and trying to figure out who I was in this very new and sometimes intimidating career which I now inhabited. I dove into male archetypes seeking direction: King, Warrior, Magician, Lover… and landed on Magician for myself. That's kind of what writers and all artists are, isn't it?

This became my entry into the world of magic, and it became a new frontier in both my writing and my life. In the course of my reading, I became fascinated by the true crime tragedy of Ricky Kasso, a pioneer in 1980s teen Satanism. Ricky was one of the first to put hallucinogenics, metal, and magic together. The fiery cocktail took him to the stars, then crashing back to earth hard. I recognized the seeker in Ricky. The outsider. Like me and my Flatliners, Ricky sought answers to the big questions. I began writing an impressionistic screenplay, *Ricky 6*, about Ricky and diving deeper into magic.

The Craft was born when I brought all this knowledge and background into a meeting with producer Doug Wick. Doug wanted to come up with either a haunted house story or a teen witch story together; I was immediately attracted to the witches. We spoke for hours about magic and times in our lives where magic felt real. Sarah Bowman, Doug's super-smart development exec, was present, and I remember telling them that magic is historically a weapon of the underclass. It was originally practiced by people of the heath or 'Heathens' – poor people without the power of a king, army, or church behind them.

Real magic requires need, emotion, and knowledge. You can't just wiggle your nose. The film would have to be about



CRAFT CRAFTER: SCREENWRITER PETER FILARDI AND HIS CREATIONS, PLAYED BY (L-R IN TOP PHOTO) RACHEL TRUE, FAIRUZA BALK, NEVE CAMPBELL, AND ROBIN TUNNEY).

the power of adolescent pain. I believe that Columbia Pictures was expecting *The Lost Boys* with women, but Doug and Sarah liked this more truthful approach and Doug sold it to them. He later brought creative development exec Lisa Tornell and writer/director Andrew Fleming into the project. Everyone contributed to the film and script. Doug was the ideal producer, collaborator, and shepherd for *The Craft*.

What kind of occult research did you do for the script?

I lived in West Hollywood, CA, and there was a small witchcraft store at the bottom of my street. There was a black curtain hanging in the back, partitioning the store. When I went behind the black curtain, I met some interesting and powerful people. I went out to the desert on vision quests to connect with the powers of nature. I touched kaleidoscopes of butterflies. My characters were sole practitioners, so I didn't feel compelled to join a coven or dive too deeply into Wiccan culture.

I did a lot of research, both reading and first-hand, into earth magic and the things we experience when we are truly open to the forces of nature around us. I used Scott Cunningham's book *Earth Power* as one of my touchstones. It's an amazing text I still reference today. *Goddesses in Everywoman* by Jean Bolen was another. Joseph Campbell's *Power of Myth* was my Bible. Hole's *Live Through This* was spot on for me musically while writing *The Craft*. It's that raw power of adolescent pain. I still think of *The Craft* whenever I hear "Doll Parts" or "Softer, Softest."

I believe that magic lives in each of us and is accessed in unique and personal ways. That's how life has worked out for me, and it's how magic manifests and grows for the four young women in *The Craft*. I did not use a witch consultant on the screenplay, though later Pat Devin, High Priestess of Covenant of the Goddess, was used as a technical advisor on the film. I'm told that Pat approved of many of my ceremonies and spells, then added her own. I can tell your readers that there is real magic embedded within *The Craft*. It may be one reason why the film continues to punch above its weight.

"YOU DON'T MAKE A CULT FILM; THE FANS DO. THEY DECIDE."

– PETER FILARDI –

BALK'S NANCY DOWNS BECAME AN ANGRY ICON FOR A GENERATION.

Each girl in this ensemble is intentionally unique. How did you develop the characters?

The girls are inspired by lots of little things. I was on the high school swim team. The core of their inspiration comes from goddess archetypes and earth elements. I believe that's why they continue to resonate with so many viewers today.

Sarah is earth. A young Hestia if you read *Goddesses in Everywoman* by Jean Shinoda Bolen. Sarah proves herself to be more grounded and stable than the others, a natural witch, immune to the temptations of power. It's upon earth that the other three elements exist. Bonnie is Air. Divination is a power of the winds and Bonnie first spots Sarah. She's a young Persephone. Innocent, naïve, sexually derailed by her physical scars until the girls heal them. Rochelle is Water. The diver, the subconscious. Rochelle typically senses when the girls have pushed too far. She's a young Artemis, self-reliant, who faces discrimination with courage. She stands tall and alone atop those diving boards, above the pettiness of the swim team below. Nancy is Fire, and all that comes with it. Nancy is passion, attraction, the light in the woods that attracts them, the wildfire that unravels them. Nancy is the shadow side of a young Hera. She's the no-nonsense, natural leader of the group until Sarah comes along and challenges her position.

Did you anticipate so many young girls would cheer for or relate to Nancy?

We all love a badass. She flexes muscle in ways the audience would love to, but might not dare.

One young woman told me recently at the Chattanooga Film Festival that the Nancy character gave her permission to express anger in her own life. Wounded, misused and with few prospects, Nancy is an angry revenge fantasy. She will not go down without swinging. People love her for that. Much of *The Craft* audience has felt down and out at some point.

Even the most popular kids in high school feel down and out, but they're just better at hiding it. Nancy is the ultimate defiant down-and-outer. I think that some women recognize Nancy's interesting character arc. Every friend group has a leader, whether she's acknowledged or not, and most young women have had a friend who blew up the group.

The film has shaped nearly four generations of teens since its debut. When did you realize the cultural impact that the film would have or was having?

About fifteen years after its release, I took my wife and daughters to an outdoor screening of the film at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery. There were a couple thousand people with picnic blankets, candles, wine. There were circles of women in black, and groups of guys in Catholic school girl uniforms. It was a real eye-opener. Ritual, cosplay, quoting lines… *The Craft* had evolved into a cult film, and that's nothing you can anticipate. Critics in 1996 were mixed on the film, but the right people have found it. You don't make a cult film; the fans do. They decide.

The other critical component to making this a cult classic is the cast. The four girls have a natural fit which I know Andy and Doug worked very hard to attain. I'd like to think the film supports alternate lifestyles, role models, and power struggles. I hope it continues to give voice and agency to all who feel, or have felt, like an outsider. And isn't that all of us? 💀

JOSH TURI'S

[NOTES FROM THE SHOP]

SECRET ORIGINS

ONE OF THE BUSIEST MAKEUP FX ARTISTS IN THE INDUSTRY KICKS OFF HIS NEW FANGORIA COLUMN BY TELLING US HOW IT ALL BEGAN.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TORSOS FROM *CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH PART 2: SUBHUMANOID MELTDOWN*; MAKING UP AMY MORSE ON THE SET OF *SERVANT*; WORKING *THE WEEKEND IT LIVES* IN 1990; A CHARRED BODY FROM NETFLIX'S *DAREDEVIL*.

My career as a makeup FX artist has taken me from student films to *Saturday Night Live*, from Tromaville to the Marvel Universe, from low-budget horror to Broadway. My company, Designs to Deceive, has been going for over three decades and I'm extremely proud of the reputation we've built over the years.

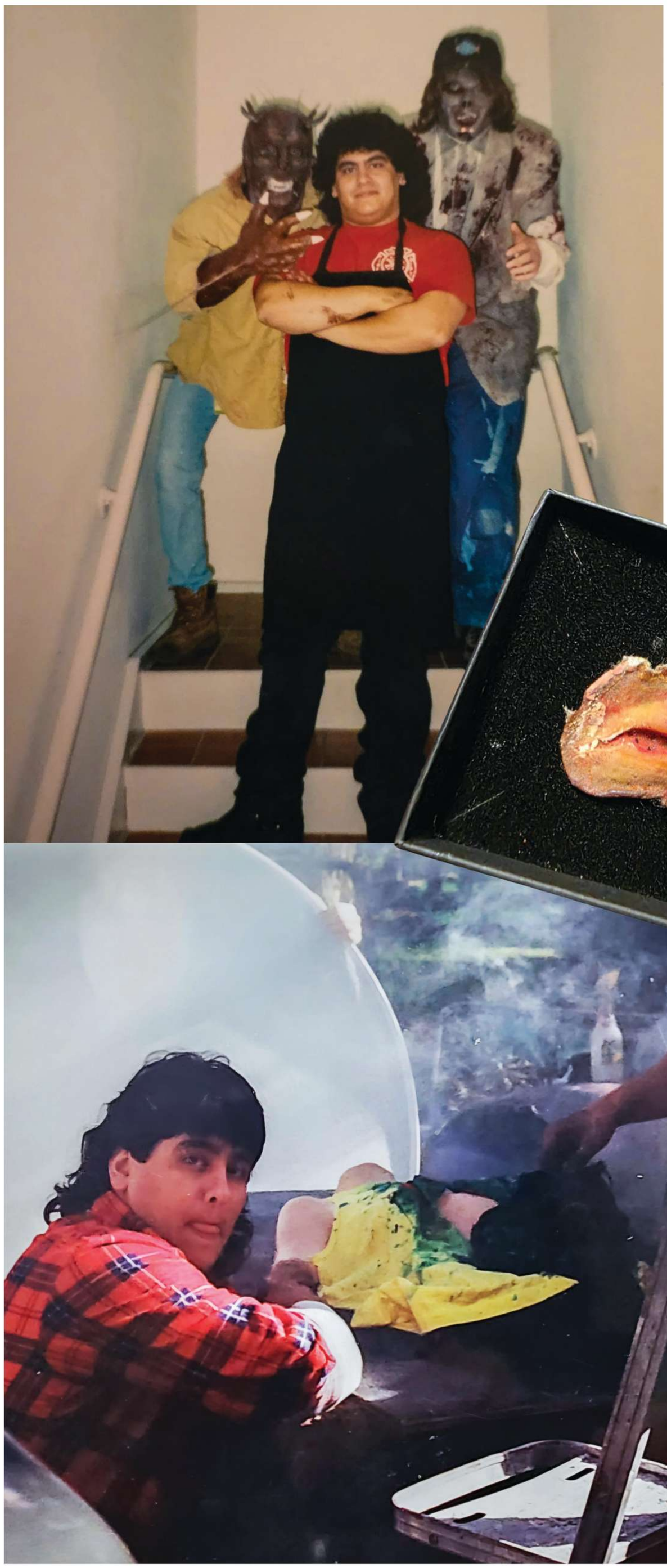
But I loved makeup before I even knew what makeup was.

I was seven. My friends and I were on the street playing army and throwing rocks. I don't know how I got the idea, but I ran into the house and grabbed some red food coloring. I dumped it all over my face, ran back out and played dead. "Ohhhh, you got me." I spent the next two weeks at school with red stains on my face. It was worth it.

As a kid in New Jersey, it was me, my mother, and my brother. My father died when I was really young, and my mother was a hard-working single mom taking care of her kids. She was working as a caterer when one day a call came in to cater a film set in New York. I was nine years old, and my mother asked me, "You want to come to work with me?" I always went and helped; I'd hand out plates to the crew. "Of course." And that's how we ended up on the set of *Exterminator 2*, a film about a New York vigilante. I was setting up the food with my mom, and I looked over and I saw this man, a makeup artist by the name of Ed French. There was a big accident sequence, and he was putting cuts on people and glass in their faces. I remember walking over and staring at what he was doing and saying, "What's going on?"

He either thought I was an extra, or he was just the nicest dude in the world. (I suspect it was the latter.) He said, "Get in the chair, kid." I got in the chair and he put this latex cut down my cheek. (I still have it.) The director thought it was cool and said, "Go lay in that pile with the bodies." And that was it, man. I felt like I got hit in the head with a hammer... I thought, "I don't understand what this is, but I have to do it."

So the next day, I busted open my piggy bank. (I think I had five bucks.) I went down to this little costume shop in my town and bought this little five-color Stein's makeup palette with a book that came with it that showed you how to do the pirate, the vampire, the hobo with the burnt cork, all that. And I just started blowing



AT A HORROR CON IN 1988, SHOWING OFF SOME MASKS I MADE.

I STILL HAVE ED FRENCH'S WOUND APPLIANCE THAT STARTED IT ALL, FROM *EXTERMINATOR 2*.

IN MY MOM'S DRIVEWAY GETTING INSERT SHOTS FOR CLASS OF *NUKE 'EM HIGH PART 2: SUBHUMANOID MELTDOWN*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOSH TURI

through that book. And that was my first introduction to makeup: "There's something called 'makeup.'" And that started my journey.

A few years later, my mom was catering this little movie called *Strong City*, which was released as *Dark City* (1990). I went with her, and befriended the makeup artist. She was this older woman who thought it was so cool that this weird kid was into makeup. I would sit there and ask, "What's that color? What's that stuff? What's that?" She was so nice to me. On day two of the shoot, she says to me, "Hey, our effects guy quit and they've got to do this foot stabbing tomorrow. You want to do it?" And before I could throw up and scream "No!" and run away, my brain just went, "Yes."

I took a shoe and mounted it to a piece of wood. I made an ankle out of a bag of cotton balls, put an ACE bandage over it because I thought, "Well, that looks like skin." I put a sock over it, then drilled a hole in the bottom and fixed a tube to it. The tube ran all the way up to the top (off-camera) with a syringe at the end. And then under the laces, I took a condom, filled it with blood and shoved it under the laces and tied it off. On "action," the guy came out and stabbed through the shoe. The condom broke and we got this burst of blood up through the laces, and I operated the syringe off-camera to produce a puddle out of the bottom.

TOP: WITH THE DEER I BUILT FOR LARRY FESSENDEN'S *WENDIGO*.

ABOVE: JIM OJALA AND ME WITH JORMA TACCONE ON A TV SPOT.

BOTTOM LEFT: A DEMON DOG PUPPET FROM *THE PARENTING*.

BOTTOM RIGHT: ON SPIKE LEE'S *DA SWEET BLOOD OF JESUS*.

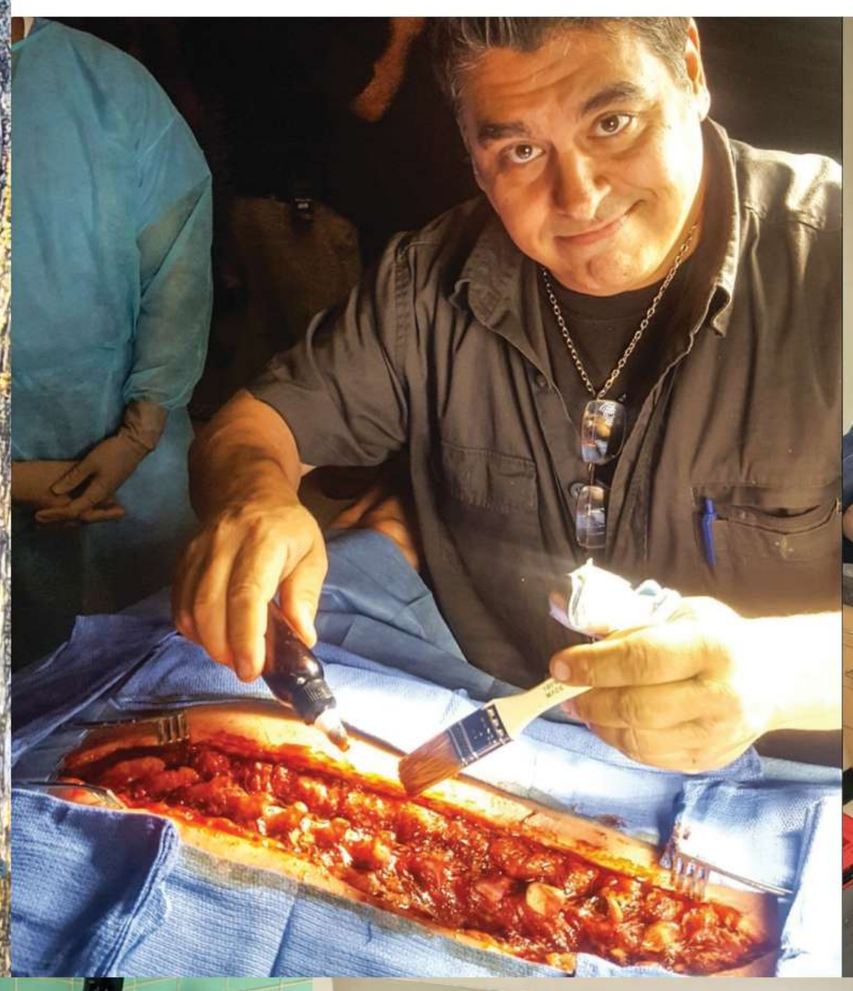
I was 16. I was scared shitless because this was a big professional crew and I'm just this little dork. So I did it… and the crew gave me a standing ovation. And I remember that feeling of the effect working on camera and I thought, "I want this for the rest of my life."

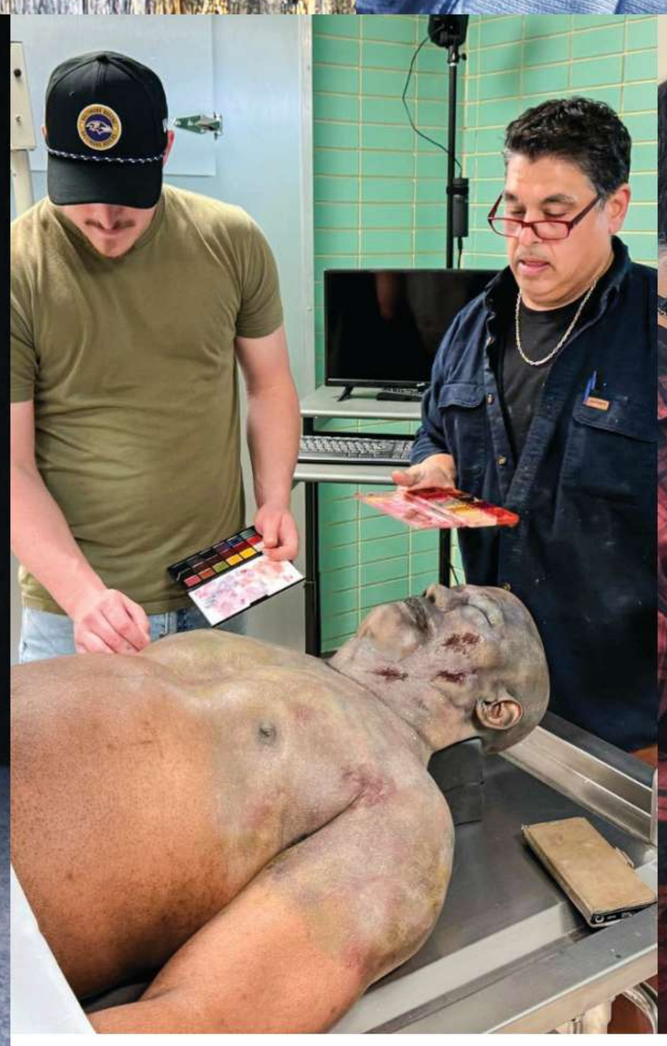
And so it began. College was not for me; I needed to be building things. When I was 17, the thought was, "Well, I guess I go out to California? Should I leave?" Around then I jumped on a couple of New York student films, and then a Troma film. I said, "All right, let me stay for a little while and we'll see what happens." And I never left.

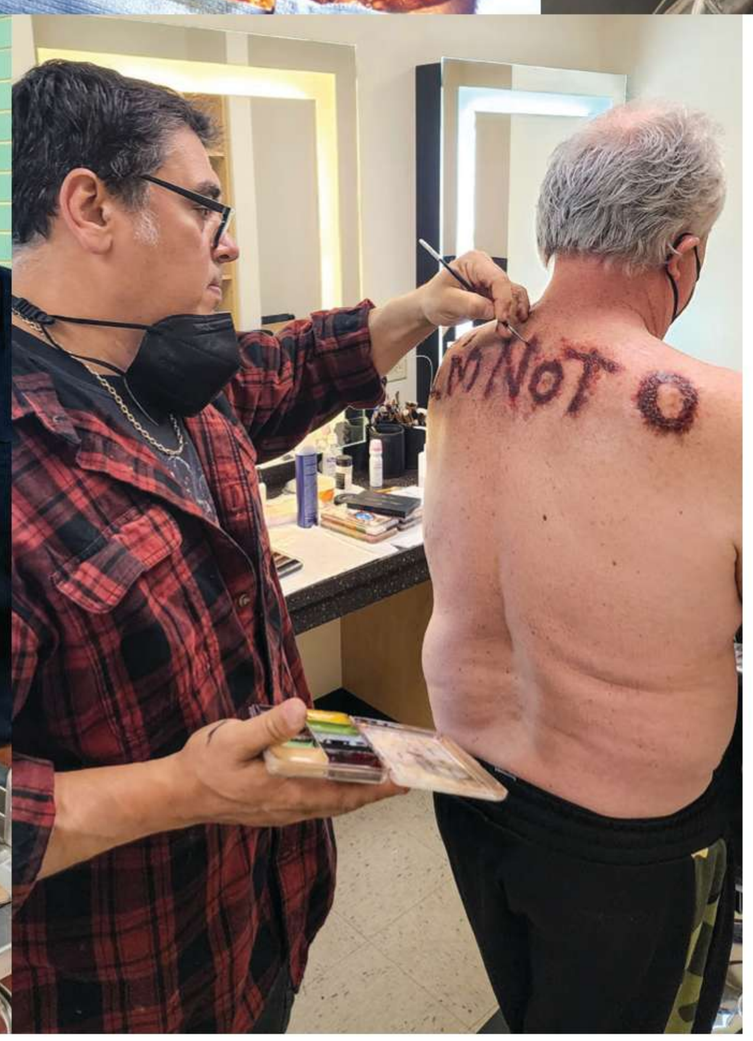
I've spent 30-plus years building my business, and I've run the gamut from theater to television to film to everything in between. Recent credits I'm proud of include the new season of *The Terror*, the Broadway shows *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, *Death Becomes Her*, and *Masquerade*, the immersive *Phantom of the Opera* experience. And I've been very lucky in my career where I've been able to meet enough people to pull me in different directions.

For me, the worst day on the best job in the world is better than any "option B" you can think of. And make no mistake: it's a hard job. You do get grumpy, and there are those days when you have to remember that little kid who dreamed of getting to do this. You slap yourself in the face and go, "Stop it. You're getting to do something that you've always wanted to do. Just shut up. Go." 💀

Next issue: Trial By Troma!







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE STAB LEG FROM MY FIRST-EVER FX JOB; MAKING SOME GORE FOR *DAREDEVIL*; GIVING A DEMON A HAND IN *THE PARENTING*; BRIAN COX GETS THE MESSAGE IN *THE PARENTING*; MAKING A BLOATED CORPSE FOR *FBI: MOST WANTED*; LOOK MA, I WON AN EMMY! (WELL, THREE, FOR *SNL*.)

Cullen Bunn's:

the World's Greatest Horror Comics!

VAMPIRES EVERYWHERE!

FOR MANY OF US, VAMPIRES MIGHT'VE BEEN THE FIRST SUPERNATURAL MONSTERS WE EVER ENCOUNTERED, OUR GATEWAY DRUG INTO THE HORROR GENRE, IF YOU WILL. MAYBE THEY WERE AN EARLY HALLOWEEN COSTUME WITH A CHEAP CAPE, WAX TEETH, AND LIPSTICK-RED "BLOOD" DRIBBLING DOWN FROM THE CORNERS OF OUR CHINS. THEY MIGHT HAVE STALKED OUR TV SCREENS AS CARTOON DUCKS... OR PUNK-ROCKERS JAMMING WITH FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER AND THE WOLF MAN... OR CO-STARS IN A TOKUSATSU MONSTER ROMP. SOME EVEN JOINED US AT BREAKFAST, FILLING OUR CEREAL BOWLS WITH CHOCOLATE MILK.

IN THAT WAY, THE VAMPIRE TURNED THE TABLES ON US.

THEY INVITED *US* IN.

AND WE EAGERLY STEPPED RIGHT ACROSS THE THRESHOLD.

THEY DO NOT SEE FERAL EYES THAT BLAZE, NOR THE SHAGGY, GROTESQUE BODY OF-- HIM WHO WATCHES...!
WE'VE DONE IT, LENORE!
WE'VE ESCAPED FRANK DRAKE--AND THAT DAMNABLY CLEVER RACHEL VAN HELSING!

Novels, movies, TV, video games, role-playing games — vampires, as the Frog Brothers warned, are *everywhere*. They've been monsters, heartbreakers, punchlines, and metaphors. They've been supervillains. They've been super*heroes*.

But it's all too easy to forget that comic books have always been one of the vampire's favorite hunting grounds.

Back in the 1940s and '50s — before superheroes ruled every spinner rack in every pharmacy and five-and-dime — horror was king. *Tales from the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror*, and *The Haunt of Fear* delivered some of the nastiest, bloodiest, most wicked little morality plays ever printed.

And they were rife with vampires.

A soldier returns home to find his worried sweetheart among the undead, flesh-shredding teeth bringing their reunion to an end. A murder-adverse vampire "skims off the top" from the blood bank where he works… until layoffs push him off the wagon. A necrophile steals a kiss from the wrong corpse and wakes a "Sleeping Beauty" who is ravenous after her nap.

Under publisher William Gaines and editor Al Feldstein, those EC (Entertaining Comics) stories pushed boundaries, poked taboos, and made parents fear brain-rotting.

Then came 1954.

Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*, blaming comics for juvenile delinquency, perversion, and the collapse of morality. The fearmongering struck a chord. Congress held hearings. Publishers freaked out. And the Comics Code Authority was born, ready to drive a stake through horror's black heart.

Vampires (and werewolves, zombies, ghouls, blood, guts, and moral ambiguity) faced an ending of apocalyptic proportions.

A few black-and-white magazines like *Eerie* and *Creepy* managed to skirt the rules, but in comics, the undead were officially dead.

For a time.

Of course, we all know that a vampire's dusty corpse can lie still for decades, but if you yank the stake from their heart, they will rise again.

When the 1970s rolled around, the Comics Code loosened its chokehold, and the monsters returned from the grave.

The Count himself starred in a long-running Marvel series. He was soon joined by Morbius the Living Vampire and Lilith, Daughter of (you guessed it) Dracula. Pulp goddess Vampirella descended from her planet Drakulon to feast on blood, but only after boiling it first.

Still, despite the Frog Brothers' warning — "You'll like this one, Mr. Phoenix. It could save your life" — comic books and graphic novels are too often afterthoughts in the world of the undead. But if you're not considering comic-book vampires, you're doing yourself a disservice.

That's where I come in. I thought we'd have a little fun. Let's play a game of "If you like that, you're gonna love this."

You bring the movies. I'll bring the comics.

"What's your favorite vampire movie?" He growled across the phone line.

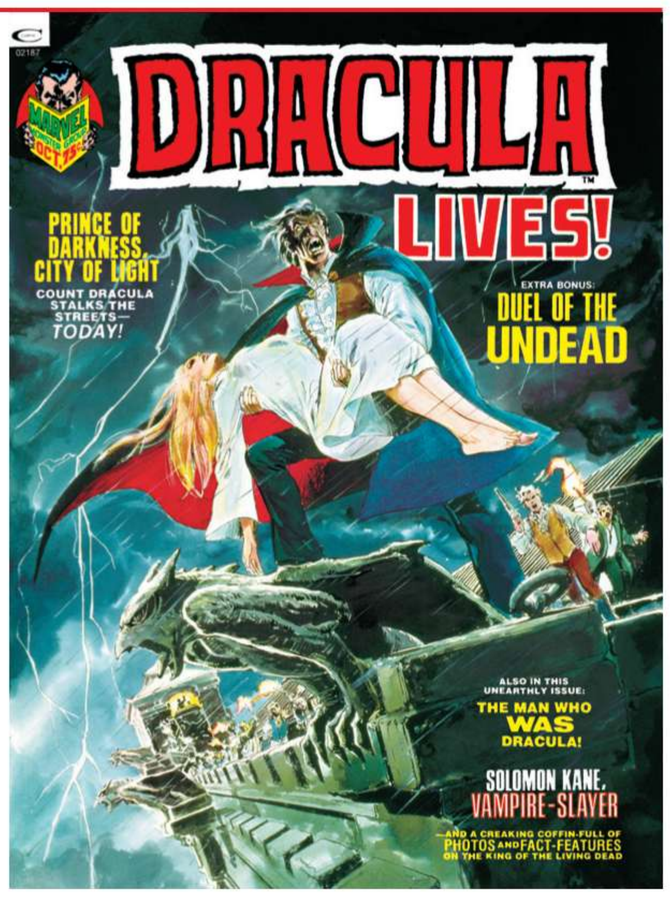
DRACULA (1931… or, really, any of the Dracula movies you like)

I know, I know. Nosferatu is the granddaddy, but that was just a Dracula knockoff. So, Dracula is his own grandpa. If this one didn't start it all, it at least made widow's peaks and thick undead accents fashionable. If Dracula is your vampire of choice, here are some comics to unearth.

***Tomb of Dracula* (Marv Wolfman & Gene Colan):** This is the Gothic Marvel masterpiece that gave us Blade. It also gave us the definitive mustachioed comic book Drac. It's hard to believe that this series, featuring an evil Dracula as its lead, ran for 70 issues.

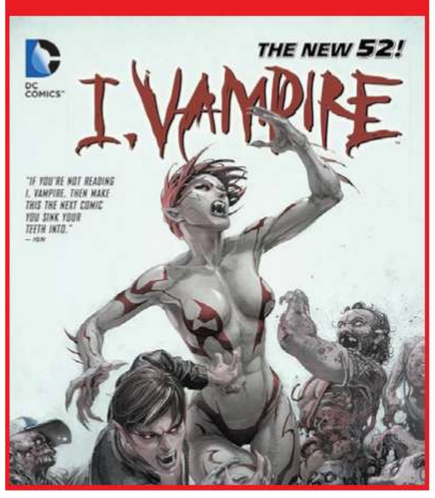
***Dracula Lives! / Vampire Tales* (Various):** Uncensored, moody, and bloody, this black-and-white magazine was a companion piece to *Tomb*, with more sex, more gore, and more lore.

***Dracula* (Matt Wagner & Kelley Jones):** And Dracula still lives in this graphic novel series that is currently underway from a pair of horror masters. This book series traces Dracula's life over the centuries.


DRACULA LIVES!
PRINCE OF DARKNESS, CITY OF LIGHT
COUNT DRACULA STALKS THE STREETS— TODAY!
EXTRA BONUS:
DUEL OF THE UNDEAD
ALSO IN THIS UNEARTHLY ISSUE:
THE MAN WHO WAS DRACULA!
SOLOMON KANE, VAMPIRE-SLAYER
—AND A CREAKING COFFIN-FULL OF PHOTOS AND FACT-FEATURES ON THE KING OF THE LIVING DEAD

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE (1994)

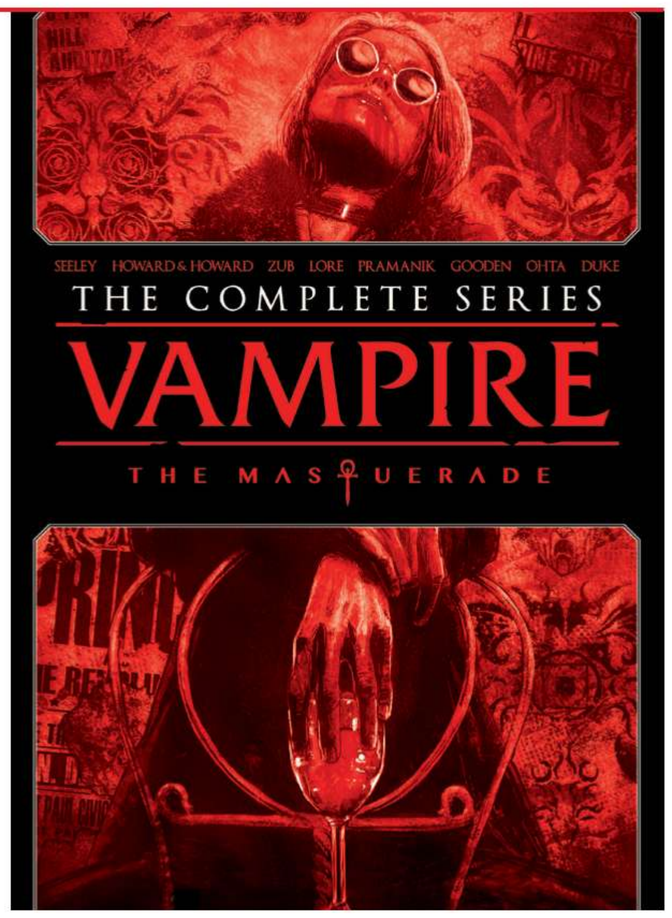
Immortality as addiction, guilt as religion. Decadent, doomed, and drenched in candlelight.



***Blood: A Tale* (J.M. DeMatteis & Kent Williams):** Is it a comic book or a watercolor hallucination? A dying vampire recounts his life, his sins, his loves, and his obsession with immortality. The nun who uncovers the tale faces her own spiritual awakening.

***I, Vampire* (Josh Fialkov, Andrea Sorrentino):** *I, Vampire* actually got its start in 1981 in the pages of *House of Mystery*. Then, it was created by J.M. DeMatteis and Tom Sutton, and reborn in 2011 from Fialkov and Sorrentino. It's a cinematic, bloody, tragic love story.

***Vampire: The Masquerade* (Vault Comics):** These comics are set in the world of a hit role-playing game of gothic punk vampirism. The game owes a great deal to Anne Rice; fans of Lestat will feel right at home.



30 DAYS OF NIGHT (2007)

Maybe you like your vampires to be less charming and more like sharks. Really, this one feels like a cheat, but the suggested comics are obvious.

***30 Days of Night* (Steve Niles & Ben Templesmith):** The original; colder, meaner, more claustrophobic than the film. Indeed, there are dozens of *30 Days of Night* series — miniseries, ongoing series, and one-shots to keep you cold on warm nights.

NEAR DARK (1987)

Kathryn Bigelow's outlaw masterpiece (and my personal favorite vampire flick) features grimy, down-and-dirty vampires who drip whiskey and machinist's oil.

***American Vampire* (Scott Snyder & Rafael Albuquerque):** Starting in the Old West and continuing into the 20th Century, the first arc was co-written by Stephen King. Skinner Sweet, the titular vampire, is a gritty vampire who would have been pals with *Near Dark*'s crew, I think.

***Vamps* (Elaine Lee & William Simpson):** The vampires in this book were once an ancient vampire's brides. Now, they're on the run, tearing across the countryside as a bloodthirsty biker gang.

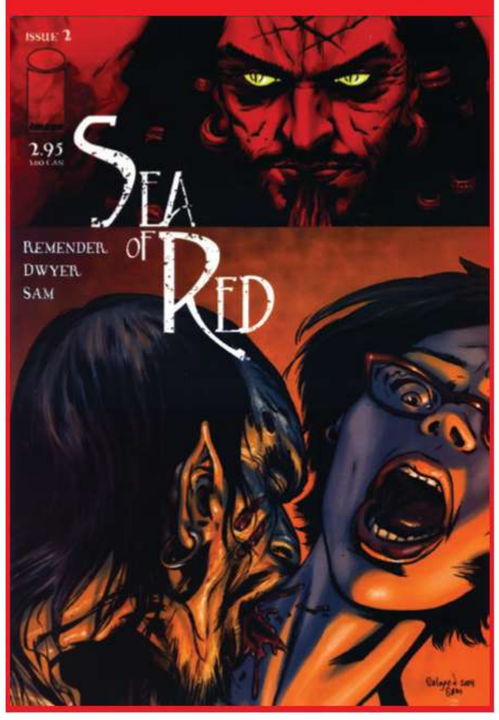
THE LOST BOYS (1987)

This film made being a vampire cool. I feel like every kid my age had a "Death by Stereo" mixtape near their cassette player. The vampire comics in the movie — *Vampires Everywhere!* and *Destroy All Vampires!* — were not published comics. They were props. However, there are some fan-made versions floating around.

***Scare Tactics* (Len Kaminski & Anthony Williams):** I might have been the only person who remembers this '90s horror comic, about a group of monsters in a rock band, so it's not just vampires. The lead singer of the group, though, was the vampiric Nina (AKA Scream Queen). She was all attitude and ripped fishnets, and she would have wrested control of David's crew from him with ease.

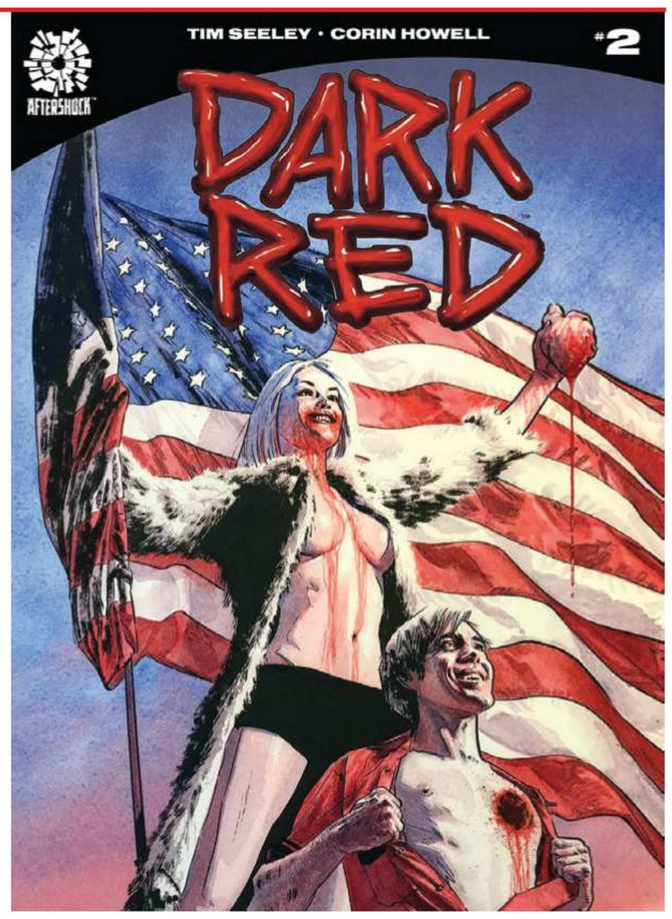
FROM DUSK TILL DAWN (1996)

Who doesn't love a crime spree gone terribly, terribly wrong?



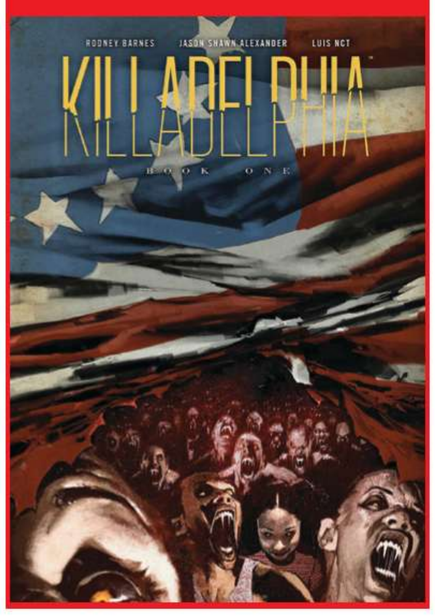
Sea of Red
(Rick Remender, Kieron Dwyer & Salgood Sam):
Imagine that the vampires in *Dusk Till Dawn* were not bikers and truckers but were instead pirates. There ya go.

***Dark Red* (Tim Seeley & Corin Howell):**
What if you get turned into a vampire and still find yourself stuck in a dead-end, middle-of-nowhere job? That's where the "hero" of this book finds himself until a seductive and powerful vampire decides to show him the light. Or the dark.



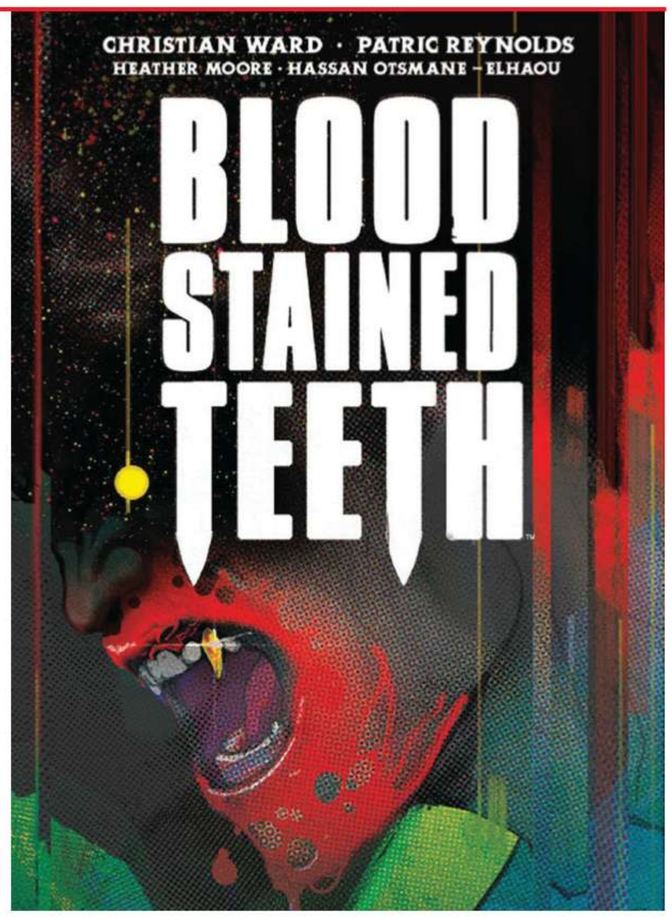
SINNERS (2025)

A Southern-Gothic bloodbath about music, kinship, faith, and redemption.



Killadelphia
(Rodney Barnes & Jason Shawn Alexander):
Philadelphia cop returns home to bury his detective father; he discovers that his old man wasn't chasing ordinary killers. He was hunting a growing nest of vampires.

Blood-Stained Teeth
(Christian Ward, Patrick Reynolds):
This is a story about capitalism as corruption, as a vampire begins selling undeath to anyone who can afford it.



VAMPIRES KNOW HOW TO ADAPT. THEY KNOW HOW TO HUNT. THEY TURN TO MIST AND DRIP THROUGH THE CRACKS OF POP CULTURE, WAITING FOR PREY. IF YOU'RE NOT LOOKING FOR THEM, YOU MIGHT MISS THEM, BUT THEY'LL FIND YOU SOON ENOUGH.

AND THEY'LL WHISPER TO YOU.

IN NOVELS. IN MOVIES. IN TV SHOWS. AND DEFINITELY IN COMICS.

ALL YOU NEED TO DO TO INVITE THEM IN IS... TURN THE PAGE. 💀

Cullen Bunn has been writing horror comics for a long time. His books include *The Sixth Gun*, *Harrow County*, *Regression*, and *Deadpool Kills the Marvel Universe* among many others. He's even written a few vampire comics, such as *The Midnite Show*, *Blood Feud*, and *Brothers Dracul*. His most recent horror comics include *Deluge* and *Ripcord* from Ignition Press. His prose novel *Bones of Our Stars, Blood of Our World* is out from Gallery Books. He hosts a YouTube show called *The Cullenoscopy* where he discusses all facets of the horror genre.

ANTHONY EVERITT'S

the VIDEO EYE of the SON of DR. CYCLOPS

On daughters, *Sisters* and Ushers.

THE BAD SEED (1956)

Two things normal people generally don't want to hear about: your dreams and your problems. The first one would be pretty easy to deal with because I don't like telling people the exact date and nature of their deaths; I say "would be" because nevertheless they keep bragging about it, like maybe they think it's a unique trait. The second, though, does seem to be a genuine problem, otherwise you can safely guarantee that they'd tell you all about it. Similarly, most people aren't particularly interested in the emotional lives of children, which is weird because I think that things like superficial charm and flat affect in an individual are interesting at any age, especially when close acquaintances of theirs keep dying in mysterious, traumatic ways when no one else is around to see it happen. But that's why this is such a great movie, because of course nobody wants to know that their child is a violent psychopath, and the majority are happy to look the other way whether the issue is a homicidal streak or stealing lunch money.

I'm actually surprised by how well it holds up, honestly. As part of the Doc's furiously curated program of "age appropriate" content during my days as a developing Cyclops, it stands out as pretty fucked up. Aside from the clinical accuracy of the little monster (all credit to an unsettling performance by child actor Patty McCormack), the depiction of the deteriorating domestic situation is powerful even by today's post-*Hereditary* standards.

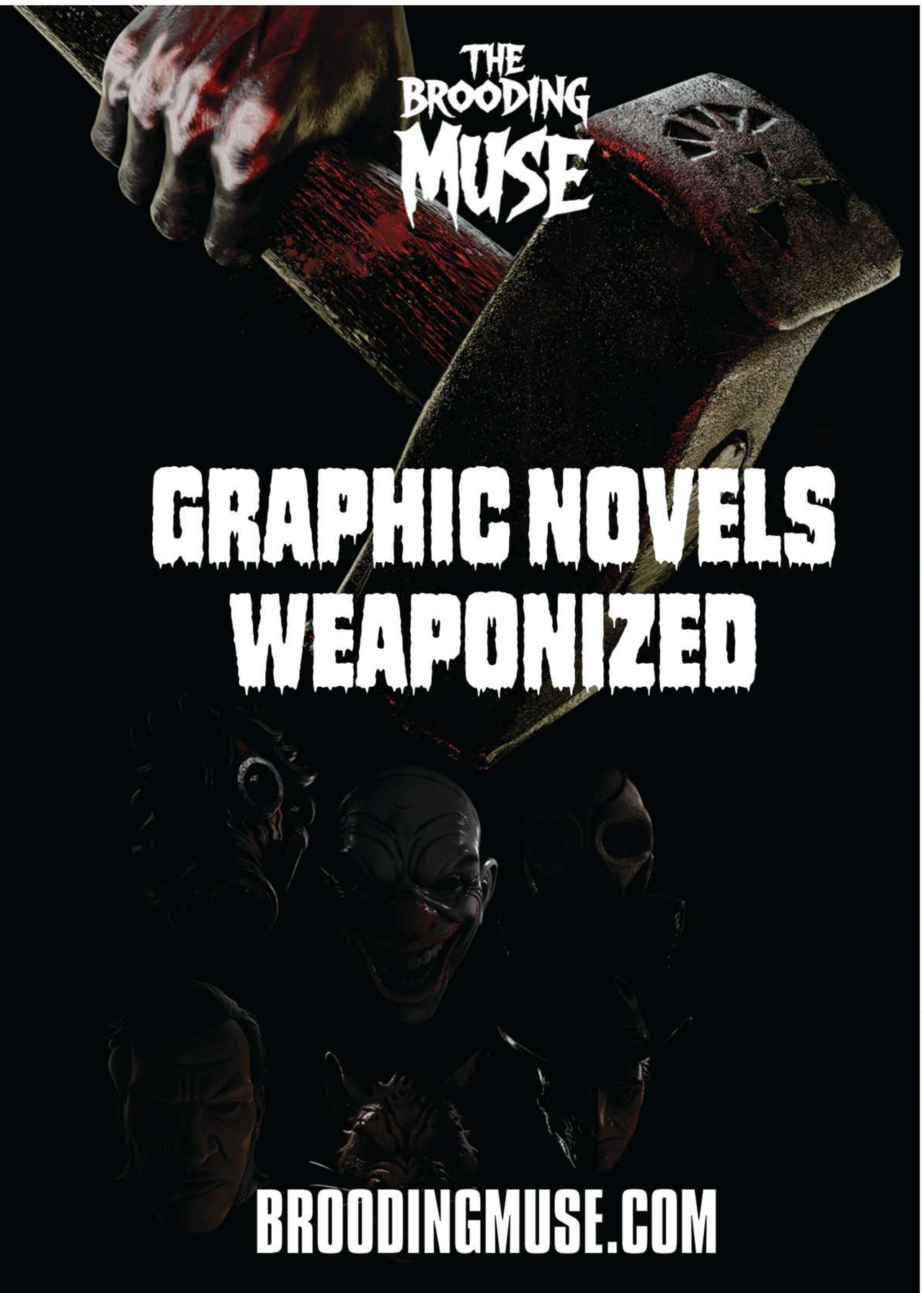
HOUSE OF USHER (1960)

Sometimes you inherit an illness or handicap so subtle, so insidious, you're not even sure you have it. Even worse, when you try to tell your friends that you're dying they say things like, "Well, the superhuman hearing is weird, and it sucks that you can't sleep or relax, but it is kinda cool, right?" or "Superhuman strength! Wow, I want that," just entirely missing the whole progressive intergenerational insanity part. Or it's "maybe you have OCD. I know a psychiatrist...," or "sounds like your house is falling apart! I know a guy...." (Don't trifle with me, Montoni, I know that you haven't set foot outside the ancestral estate for years without turning into an atavistic raving lunatic, loping on all fours and screaming constantly. At least I own up to my quirks). The problem is convincing any completely healthy siblings you might have of their own impending doom, especially when they're insisting on their "personal right" to procreate and "have a life." Ew, right? And dumb. We're sitting here in the parlor eating gruel, listening to my Schoenberg lute covers and admiring the abstract expressionist art covering the walls, and it isn't even 1825. Come on, we're just too far out for that.

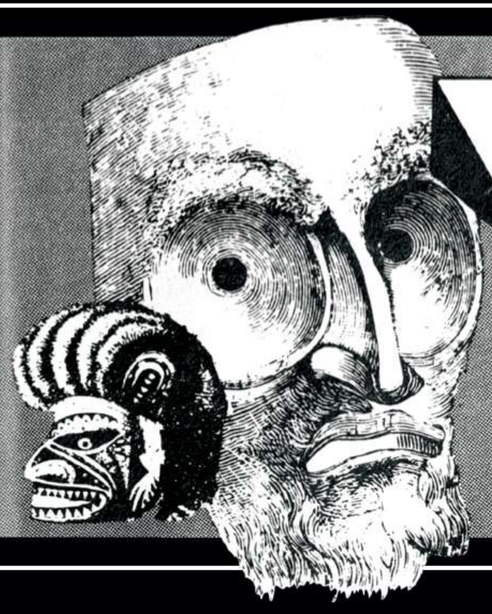
That's where we can all learn a lesson about acceptance, not just of ourselves, but of others. Let them live their own lives, or kill them with your bare hands, don't wait for an excuse to bury them alive. It's way too messy and cruel, and nobody will talk to you for months.

SISTERS (1972)

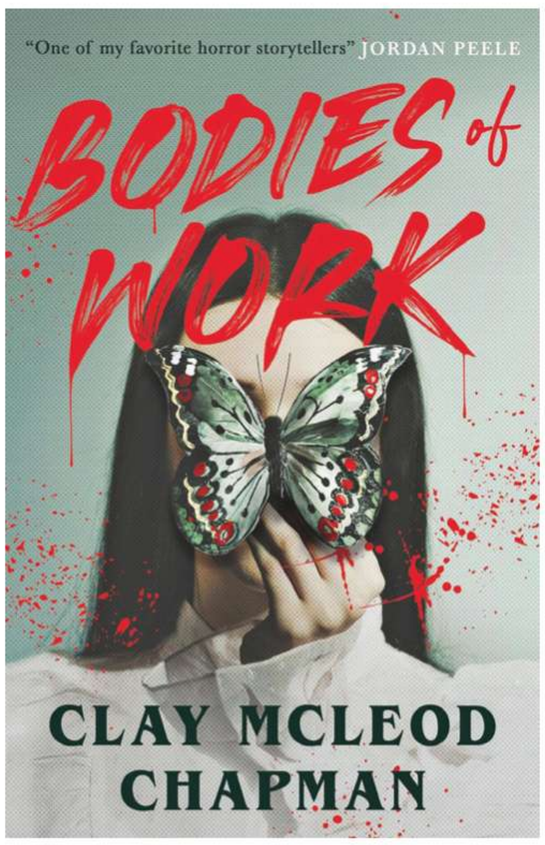
David Cronenberg is kind of known for transforming the lower regions of Canada into the bizarre psychosexual Transylvania of North America. But a few years before the latter was infecting Montreal condo residents with a venereal nightmare parasite, Brian De Palma was channeling his weird Hitchcockian voyeurism fetish into this film about a schizoid mental health outpatient from Quebec. Oh, I can just hear your snarky commentary now: "De Palma fetishizing voyeurism? What's next, heavy bricks?" Well, smartass, he'd done a handful of films by '72 and only some involved deviance of a more-or-less criminal sort, and believe it or not, this one is thematically about other things. The subtle ways that public scrutiny and unwanted attention can internalize the shame of physical deformity, for instance. It's hard enough avoiding that with family members, but then when you can't even sleep with your psychiatrist without catching flak from your psychotic Siamese twin, it really makes you think. Maybe privacy is a luxury most of us take for granted. And whatever you might think of De Palma, when he's on, he is on. A lot of the choices in framing, editing, even the dialogue itself are simply great. I don't even care that he's ripping off *Rear Window*, the way he strategically uses camera movement to build dread and disorient the viewer often puts a lot of Hitchcock movies to shame. And, frankly, the inherent perviness just works, right down to the embedded "Peeping Tom" game show sequence in the first scene. As I doubt Ronald Alcala was a cinephile, it's also an especially haunting example of life-imitating-art. 💀



NIGHTMARE LIBRARY



BY AHLISSA EICHHORN



BODIES OF WORK

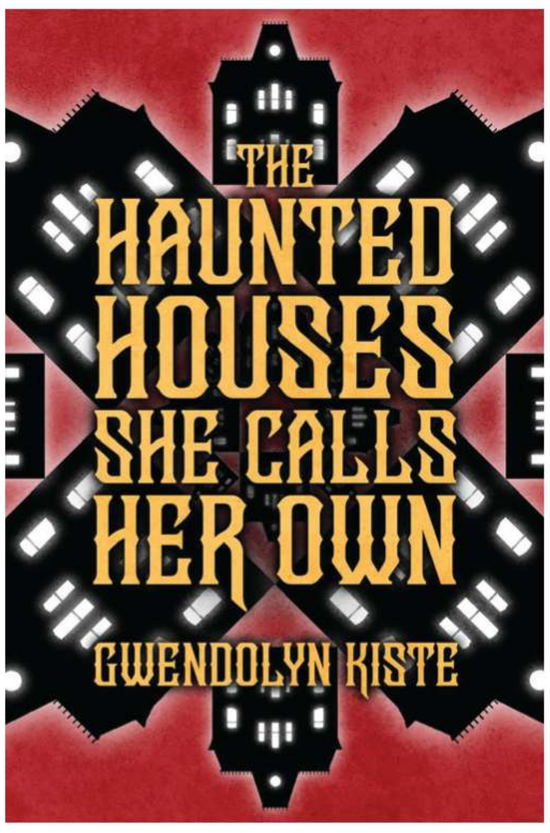
DUE OUT:
4/07/2026

AUTHOR:
Clay McLeod Chapman

PUBLISHER:
Titan

A lot of deplorable things are done in the name of art. In Chapman's upcoming novella, murdering lost women is one of those things. In *Bodies of Work*, readers follow church janitor Winston Kemper as he completes his masterpiece, *The Butterfly Girls*, an acid-trip epic he's scrawled in notebooks and paintings over the decades. He's close to getting one last body to complete it. Then the voices of his past victims start to surface in his mind — even though he cut them out years ago.

A blinding, buck-wild turn of events is a welcome surprise in any horror story, and this narration is anything but straightforward. Nameless voices disrupt the killer's tale as they reclaim a semblance of justice for their own forgotten legacies. The more they speak, the more they remember. The effect is bonkers but totally inventive. The controlled chaos continues with Kemper's warped interludes and gory flashbacks. But the book's arresting prose isn't spent on lurid content alone. An actual artist served as its main inspiration, one that drowned in hallucinatory content and color. This mashup with killers is a wacky, literary geyser beautifully contained in a slim word count. *Bodies of Work* is a demented wonderland of fantasy and carnage, all gussied up in a true crime outfit. It pulls off risks in weathered territory, assuring readers that Chapman commands madcap horror.



THE HAUNTED HOUSES SHE CALLS HER OWN

DUE OUT:
4/14/2026

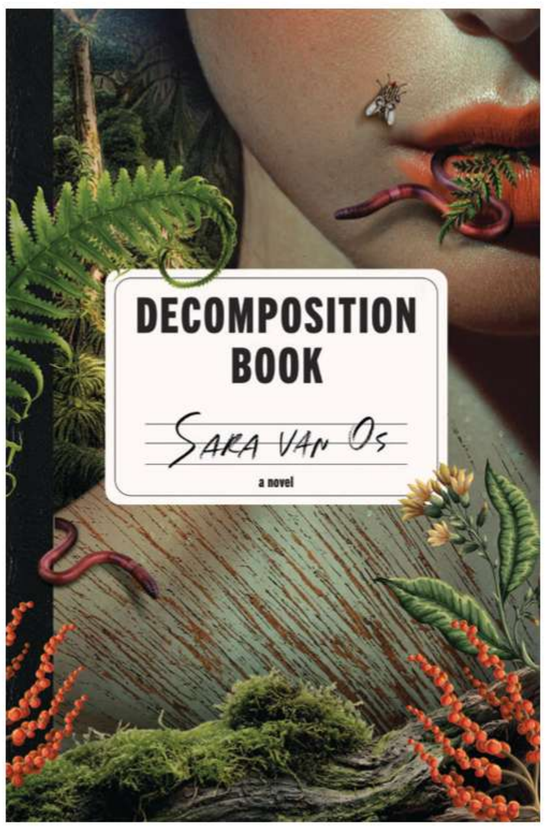
AUTHOR:
Gwendolyn Kiste

PUBLISHER:
RDS Publishing

It can be tough recommending short story collections. Too many tones and settings on opposing ends of the spectrum can harsh a vibe, fast. Thankfully, this isn't a concern with Kiste's latest publication. The 13 stories in *The Haunted Houses She Calls Her Own* live in harmony under a wide umbrella of speculative, weird horror. Supernatural, sci-fi, true crime, and beasties writhe in sync among tales of haunted movies, board games, and apartment buildings. Familiar literary and historical figures are reimagined with redemptive ends to their tragic tales. Sisterly and maternal bonds are explored repetitively, alongside lover dynamics. Kiste understands the makings of authentic queer characters, and not shoehorned, rainbow-washed personalities.

Every story is told from a woman's perspective, homing in on rage and displacement. More than anything, the anthology speaks of escape. Escape from abuse, self-loathing, or dying cities designed to crush your dreams. The feeling of disillusionment is weighty at times, but nobody said life (or horror) was full of sunny resolutions. These characters are complex, labeled as neither definite victims nor villains as they fight their opposition. They're survivors of cruelty clawing towards an unfettered future. *The Haunted Houses She Calls Her Own* goes beyond the revenge trope. It's not hung up on the final girl syndrome or flashy showdowns. It's a nuanced, feminine horror universe only Kiste could write.

GIRL AFRAID. GIRL, INTERRUPTED. GIRL TROUBLE. SOME OF THE GREATEST BOOKS, SONGS, AND FILMS SHARE THE OUTCAST WOMAN AS THEIR MUSE. These anti-heroines are, and aren't, what you expect. Their complexities and imperfections make them captivating characters. In horror, they can play any part. They don't need to be likeable to be worthy. They don't need to save anyone else to be redeemed. The misfits below jump off the page as they fight back, die trying, and scrape by.



DECOMPOSITION BOOK

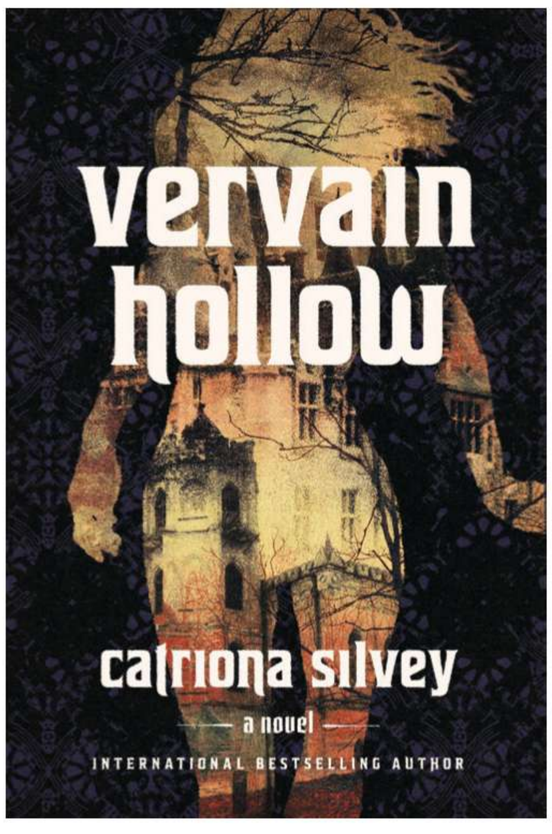
DUE OUT:
5/19/2026

AUTHOR:
Sara van Os

PUBLISHER:
Hanover Square Press

Wondering what you'd do with a dead body isn't an odd activity for most genre readers. This whirlwind romance by van Os may spark some new possibilities. *Decomposition Book* is a tender, concerning tale of a heartbroken woman and her corpse confidant. Readers meet Savannah at a low point, hunkering down in her family's cabin after a slight breakdown. There she finds Ana, a dead hiker, and the journal detailing her horrific last days in the wilderness. A connection sparks between them, and Savannah falls into her story one rotting day at a time.

The lead's bizarre, vulnerable behavior doesn't make her any less relatable. Her severe OCD dominates the narrative, pushing readers through uncomfortable, endless loops. Handling a decomposing body is doable. But managing your meds and intrusive thoughts? That's a task. The dual POVs of each woman carry the graphic, unbridled backbone of the book. The brow-raising scenery ranges from revolting to sexy. It's practically dying for a riotous film adaptation. Its darkness is diluted by a quippy, apologetic millennial attitude. No matter how soul-crushing the event, there's levity to help you traverse the terror. This novel is like eating all your popcorn before the movie starts. Its immediate addictiveness distracts you from the gross, greasy contents. And when it's over? Tear-coated satisfaction. *Decomposition Book* is weird-girl lit at its most striking.



VERVAIN HOLLOW

DUE OUT:
6/16/2026

AUTHOR:
Catriona Silvey

PUBLISHER:
Union Square & Co.

Not every ill fate starts with a bad intention. Loneliness, desire, and guilt are equally harmful catalysts for destruction, like the kind found in cult horror *Vervain Hollow*. Laura didn't leave her cult by choice. Two years ago, she fled the hollow and its god-like leader, Vervain, as it swelled up in flames. Even after the tragedy, she still longs for his intoxicating power. Hope is futile until her estranged friend asks for help. Vervain has lured another member back, seemingly beyond the grave. It's up to them to sever ties once and for all. But for Laura, it's a chance to return to the unreal life she's been so lost without.

The supernatural elements, including a ghost story subplot, are fantastic foundations for this kind of story. An isolated mansion setting plays well into feelings of abandonment and misdirection. Eerie backdrops aside, the human conflicts remain the most unsettling aspect. Laura is deeply indoctrinated, speaking directly to her leader as she narrates the story from the past and present. This flashback structure adds salt to the wound, confessing to the reader all the fatal decisions that were made in the pursuit of acceptance. *Vervain Hollow* is a chilling, passionate exploration of cult survival with impeccable Gothic sensibilities. The scariest part of this story is just how well it showcases the terrible power of manipulation.

Contributors' Crypt

Follow our talented roster of contributors on social media, while you're still legally allowed to do so!

Emily Bennett ..... @emilyrbennett
Meredith Borders ..... @mereborders
Cullen Bunn ..... @cullenbunn
Barbara Crampton .. @barbaracrampton
Ahlissa Eichhorn .. @hauntedbydeadlines
Isaac Feldberg ..... @ijfeldberg
sHANE tEA fRENCH .. @shane_tea_french
Kolleen Carney Hoepfner .... @kolleenbee
Yulissa Morales ..... @_yulissamora
Richard Newby ..... @rnewb
SinnStax Photo + Media .....@sinnstax
Amber T ..... @hornbloodfire
Josh Turi ..... @joshturimakeup

Things to Come

This summer will bring the heat in more ways than one: EVIL DEAD BURN and SCARY MOVIE 6 are coming in hot, while the new videogame HELLRAISER: REVIVAL promises to make FANGORIA #32 not only scary, but positively steamy! Is it possible for a horror magazine to be too hot? Well, f*** ice — Fango's burning it all down this July!

CLASSIFIED AD VAULT

Check out the new music video for Porcelain Girls' "Wait in the Rain" by Madonno Productions!

Everyone at Fango is sending healing vibes to Tim, and hugs to Fran!

Who would win in a fight: Cronenberg or Carpenter?

FMK: Jason, Michael, Leatherface - go!

When it comes down to making out, whenever possible, put on side one of Led Zeppelin IV.

Congratulations to my gal Sally O'Malley on being able to kick, stretch, and kick! <3

Can you honestly tell me you forgot? Forgot the magnetism of Robin Zander, or the charisma of Rick Nielsen?
- Charli XCX, probably

It's always Jennifer's Body this and Jennifer's Body that. What about Jennifer's MIND? Huh?!

You use your face. You use your body. You use everything. That's what I do. I mean I just send out this vibe and I have personally found that women do respond. - Damone

FREE HORROR PITCHES: Frankenstein's Credit Rating; Taste the Profiteroles of Dracula; Curse of the Werewolf's Health Insurance; Satan's Timeshare; Abbott & Costello Meet La Llorona; Amityville HOA.

Mr. Welliver, if you're reading this, I love Bosch.

Magic: The Gathering should do a TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE Secret Lair. Whenever Leatherface kills a creature, create a food token.

Noah Hawley, hear me out. In ALIEN: EARTH a facehugger that is too small for a human attaches to a pug so we get a Xeno-Pug.

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